

'Raghuvansham' of Kalidas

The Story of Kings of Raghu Dynasty of Ancient India, Including the Story of the Ramayana

(Text, Roman Transliteration & English rendering with
Detailed Commentary and Explanations.)

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Preface

A Brief Introduction to Kalidas' Raghuvansham:

'Raghuvansham' is an epic poem written by Kalidas, a poet par-excellence and a Sanskrit scholar of medieval India, who is highly respected and universally regarded as the 'Shakespeare of India'. He was a Sanskrit scholar, a poet, a dramatist and a playwright, all rolled into one. His creative writings are unmatched in the annals of Sanskrit literature, and no single author has been able to match his abilities and stupendous creativity ever since his time.

The epic poetry known as 'Raghuvansham' has 19 Cantos in all. It is a wonderfully described historical narrative of the kings of the Raghu dynasty that was named after king Raghu, son of king Dilip. It traces the life and time of great, illustrious, valiant and honourable kings, starting from king Dilip, father of Raghu, and goes on to narrate the stories of all other great kings of this dynasty, including Lord Ram, and ends with the last king of this dynasty whose name was Agnivarna. The total number of kings belonging to this dynasty was 29, and included Lord Ram, the famous hero of the epic Ramayana. Raghu-vansha pertained to the last chain of kings of the Solar Race, and with its end also came an end of the famed Solar Race that traced its origin to the Sun-God.

This marvellous narrative bears the signature style of poet Kalidas as it is full of metaphors, analogies, similes and other aspects of figures of speech, and is coloured and embellished by an expert poet's magnificent power of imagination with which he has penned an engaging narrative as he goes on to describe in detail the reign, the life and time, and the achievements as well as the failings of all the kings of king Raghu's dynasty.

From a historical perspective, the story of Raghuvansham straddles two eras, the 2nd and the 3rd, of the Hindu 4-era cycle of creation and destruction. The 2nd era is known as the Treta Yuga and it pertains to the period of Lord Ram, and with the Lord's departure for heaven this era ended. Then came the 3rd era known as Dwapar which is best known for the period of Lord Krishna and the Mahabharat war. After Lord Ram, his son Kush rebuilt the city of Ayodhya in the memory of his father at the very beginning of Dwapar,

the 3rd era, or at best in a period of time that was a transition period between Treta and Dwapar Yugas. His son Atithi became the dynasty's next king. After him came 21 famous kings who carried forward the good name and honour of their ancient family. The last king, the 22nd king after Atithi, was Agnivarna who presided over the end of this illustrious dynasty.

It is obvious that all the kings who followed Lord Ram ruled in the 3rd Hindu era known as Dwapar that coincided with the era of Lord Krishna. As a proof of this assertion we read in canto 18 of Raghuvansham that one of the later kings named Pankaj-Lochan had renounced the world and gone to sage Jaimini to become his disciple (canto 18, verse no. 33). Sage Jaimini lived between the 4th and the 2nd century BCE. {According to some accounts, he lived between 250-50 BCE. Whatever, the fact is that he lived at the fag-end of Dwapar.} He had written a book titled 'Jaimini Bharat' which narrates the horse sacrifice conducted by Yudhisthir, one of the Pandava brothers, and it is based on the epic book called the Mahabharat which describes the life and time of Lord Krishna as well as the epic war by the same name. This means that when Jaimini wrote his book 'Jaimini Bharat', the epic war of Mahabharat had already happened. And it also means that this king lived during the time of sage Jaimini, i.e. the 4th-2nd century BCE, which in turn translates into a period of time coinciding with last quarter of Dwapar.

Hence, it is clear that the lineage of the Raghu dynasty, which started in late Treta Yuga, extended till the end of the Dwapar Yuga when it culminated with the last king named Agnivarna.

The main intent of the poet Kalidas in writing 'Raghuvansham' seems to be: first, to recount history and describe how a great family of king Raghu, the descendant of the famous Solar Race and the ancient king Manu, first rose, then reached the pinnacle of its glory, and ultimately declined to virtually vanish from the annals of history; and two, in this process, get an opportunity to purify his mind and pen by narrating the holy story of Lord Ram, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and the hero of the universally acclaimed epic known as the 'Ramayana', as part of his book, which he does in Canto nos. 10-15.

So therefore, in this classical poetry 'Raghuvansham', the poet Kalidas has brilliantly blended history and its facts faithfully, but at the same time showed the brilliant side of his imaginative mind by adding a liberal dash of poetic freedom by including fascinating descriptions of the exotica and the erotica interspersed liberally in the narrative, which gives the reader a very absorbing and truly invigorating narrative that holds the reader's attention riveted to it, from start to finish.

His writing style paints a vivid picture of Nature with its beauty and variety, as well as of the different aspects of the high society of those ancient times, with little restrictions and inhibitions while describing details of the feminine form and scenes that seem to arouse passions, which may look immodest or indecent to some people, but which were the norm in classical writings of those ancient times. And classical poetry has a different plane on which it stands as compared to a holy scripture, and Raghuvansham is a classical poetry and not a scripture.

Even today, from what still survives in physical terms, we find that there are many temples of ancient times whose walls depict explicit scenes of sex and passions in varying shades which, strictly speaking, should not be carved on the walls of a religious shrine, as the shrine is not intended to arouse sensual passions but overcome it in order to divert the mind to the divine, away from worldly lust and sensual pleasures.

That said, let us learn a bit more about the poet Kalidas: He was a great poet and dramatist of ancient India. It is believed that he was a court poet of the legendary king of Ujjain named Chandragupta-II, also called Vikramaditya, who ruled roughly between 380-415 A.D. (i.e. between the late 4th and the early 5th centuries).

Kalidas wrote many classical Sanskrit texts, both as long a poem and as a drama. The present Book 'Raghuvansham' is his stellar poem that, as the title itself suggests, is a narration of the dynasty of king Raghu of the Solar Race, a dynasty in which Lord Ram, regarded as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was born. The purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down to earth as Lord Ram was to eliminate the scourge of the demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka. Ravana had spread terror marked by unfettered cruelty and reckless bloodshed in this world, not even sparing sages and gods.

'Raghuvansham' is regarded as a Mahakavya, a great epic that is a magnificent poetic rendition of an ancient story. The 'story' primarily deals with Lord Ram, and this story is highly revered as it describes the life and time of the Supreme Being who came to live on this earth amongst ordinary human beings, thereby blessing the earth and all its inhabitants.

'Raghuvansham' is an epic poem written by Kalidas, a poet par-excellence and a Sanskrit scholar of medieval India, who is highly respected and universally regarded as the 'Shakespeare of India'. He was a Sanskrit scholar, a poet, a dramatist and a playwright, all rolled into one. His creative writings are unmatched in the annals of Sanskrit literature, and no single author has been able to match his abilities and stupendous creativity ever since his time.

'Raghuvansham' has 19 Cantos in all. It is a detailed narrative of the dynasty of the Kings of the Solar Race in which Lord Ram was born. This poem called 'Raghuvansham', however, derives its name from king Raghu, who was the son of king Dilip, the first king of the immediate branch of the family tree in which Lord Ram was born. It goes on to narrate the life and time of all the 27 kings of this branch of the family which ended with its last king known as Agnivarna. It is like a historical narrative that describes in detail that is coloured and embellished by an expert poet's magnificent power of imagination and engaging narrative, the reign, the life and time, and the achievements as well as the failings of all the kings of the race descending from king Dilip and his son king Raghu. This lineage is also known as the Solar Race, because it is believed to have originated from the Sun God.

Kalidas' grasp of the subject, his expertise in scholarly use of the Sanskrit language with all its finer nuances, his extensive use of various figures of speech such as metaphors, similes and analogies, and telling a story in vivid details by employing all these literary tools, is so extraordinary that he is referred to as the Shakespeare of India.

His fluent and liberal use of idioms, metaphors, similes and analogies in his composition in order to explain the verse in vivid detail and in an expressive manner has entitled him to be called a 'King of Upmaas', i.e. someone who is un-paralleled as far as use of different types of figures of speech is concerned in order to give a comprehensive picture of what is being said in a given verse. This aspect of his writing will be evident as we proceed with our reading of Raghuvansham.

His most notable works are (i) the two Mahakavyas (epic long poems): Kumarsambhava and Raghuvansham; (ii) the three dramas: Abhijat-Shakuntalam, Vikramorvashiyam and Maalavikaagnimitram; and (iii) a two Khanda-kavyas (short poems): Meghadoot and Ritusamhara. Kalidas' creative writings are unmatched in the annals of Sanskrit literature, and no single author has been able to match his abilities and stupendous creativity ever since his time.

A story goes that Kalidas got his name from goddess Kali (pronounced 'Kaali'). The word 'Kalidas' means a servant or devotee of goddess Kali, or someone who is graced by goddess Kali. His parents were childless, so they offered worship to the goddess, and when a son was born to them they named him Kalidas in honour of their patron goddess Kali.

There is another legend associated with his name. According to it, Kalidas was an illiterate, but was somehow married to an learned princess named Vidyottama (Vidyottamā) who abandoned him finding that he had no education at all. She told him that if he wanted to continue with this relationship, then he must first become educated. Thus rebuked, Kalidas devoted himself to the worship of goddess Kali who blessed him with mastery over the Sanskrit language. Thus he became a Kali-Das, i.e. a servant or devotee who has been graced or blessed by goddess Kali. He then went back to his wife who put him a question with three words: 'Asti Kashchid Vagarthiyam' (Asti Kaścid Vāgarthaḥ), meaning 'is there anything special in expression'.

In reply, Kalidas repeated the same words in the same order, but in the affirmative-- Asti ("there is"), Kaścit ("something") and Vāgarthaḥ ("in the spoken word and its meaning").

Later on, when Kalidas composed his three classics, (i) Kumarasambhava, (ii) Meghaduta and (iii) Raghuvamsham, he used these three words in the reverse order at the very commencement of his composition, i.e. as the first word of the first verse of these three classics, but in the reverse order. So therefore, he used 'Vagarthiyam' as the first word in Raghuvansham, 'Kashchid' as the first word in Meghaduta, and 'Asti' as the first word in Kumarsambhava respectively.

With this brief introduction to Kalidas, now let us focus our attention to the present Book 'Raghuvanshan' in which each single verse has been painstakingly explained with contexts and comprehensive notes so that the reader shall have an in-depth and all-inclusive knowledge of this classic. The endeavour of this author is to explain the book in simple and day-to-day English language so that even those who are not so conversant with the writing style of ancient Indian classics in Sanskrit can easily and comfortably read and enjoy this book. This book will therefore be equally useful for casual readers and scholars who wish to delve deeper into the myriad events that are narrated therein.

When Kalidas decided to retell the legendary story of Lord Ram, known universally as the 'Ramayana', he chose to begin his famed narration from king Dilip (Canto nos. 1-3), the father of king Raghu. He based his choice of starting the poem from king Dilip by relying on Srimad Bhagwat, Skandha (Canto) 9, Adhyaaya (Chapter) 10 that also does the same while describing the story of Lord Ram, as well as the age-old tradition that a great son's father should be given due honour. So therefore, while naming his book after king Raghu as 'Raghuvansham' (meaning the race of king Raghu), a forefather of Lord Ram, Kalidas began his actual narrative from Raghu's father king Dilip to whom he dedicated the first three Cantos (nos. 1-3).

In the following six Cantos, Kalidas goes on to describe the story of Dilip's descendants, including king Raghu on whom this book is named, till king Dasrath (Canto nos. 4-9).

Since his primary objective was to recount the epic story of the Ramayana in his inimitable style, so he described the life and time of Lord Ram in 6 Cantos (Canto nos. 10-15), starting with the Lord's birth and ending with his departure from this mortal world for his primary abode in the heaven.

Again, he wanted to give his poetical narrative a historical angle as well, so he included the stories of the kings who descended from Lord Ram, beginning with Kush, the Lord's elder son, and ending with Agnivarna, the last king of the Raghu dynasty (Canto nos. 16-19).

For ease of reading and for the purpose of classification of its chapters, this Book is divided into three Chapters as follows:-

(1) Chapter 1 contains Canto nos. 1-9 (nine cantos) and describes the stories of Lord Ram's immediate ancestors, beginning with king Dilip and ending with king Dashrath, the father of Lord Ram.

(2) Chapter 2 contains Canto nos. 10-15 (six cantos) that describe the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ramayana, beginning with his birth and ending with his ascendance to heaven.

(3) Chapter 3 contains Canto nos. 16-19 (four cantos) that narrate the story of Lord Ram's descendants, beginning with his son Kusha, and ending with Agnivarna with whom this dynasty ended.

Our Book presents a comprehensive and detailed English version of Raghuvansham, verse-by-verse. It has the original Sanskrit text, Roman Transliteration and English rendering of the verses followed by detailed notes to explain the verses more clearly. Since Kalidas has liberally used various tools of figure of speech, such as similes, metaphors and analogies in his verses, the notes accompanying the verses explain them fully and their relevance to the subject matter of the respective verse.

After reading the full text of Raghuvansham, one will not fail to marvel at the extensive body of knowledge on a variety of subjects that Kalidas, a literary genius, had--such as political science, military science, natural sciences, history, geography, mythology, philosophy, language and grammar, the finer aspects of Sanskrit composition, etc.--especially in an age when there was no internet and freely available sources of information, and the only source of knowledge were a handful of experts on different subjects, living in different places, or reference books and scriptural texts in limited number of libraries. Further, there were no computers and modern writing-and-editing tools; an error meant discarding an entire hand-written page on parchment paper, as there was no scope of erasing the mistake with an eraser and then re-writing it again. So therefore, to have grasp of a wide swathe of knowledge from different fields, and to be able to incorporate this knowledge, without a single error, in one's own writing, especially in the form of specific and to-the-point analogies, metaphors and similes, Kalidas must surely have been exceptionally gifted and talented scholar.

With this background information, now let us start with the actual reading of 'Raghuvansham', and enjoying this classical version of the story of the Ramayana as narrated by the famed poet Kalidas.

I hope my efforts would bear fruit, and my beloved Lord Ram will accept this humble offering of mine as a thanksgiving gesture for all that he has done for me in my life.

Amen!

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Chapter 1-- The Immediate Ancestors of Lord Ram

Chapter 1 contains Canto nos. 1-9 of Raghuvansham, and together they describe in poetic detail the life and time of the ancestors of Lord Ram, beginning with king Dilip and ending with king Dashrath, the father of the Lord.

We shall read all these Cantos one-by-one in the following pages.

Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-95:

Introduction

The poem Raghuvansham opens with the customary salutation to Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati, Lord Shiva's consort. They were the favourite deities of poet Kalidas. After the brief reference to the origin of the Solar Race, the poet gives us an account of king Dilip, the great-great-grand father of Lord Ram. The description of Dilip's virtues and moral values indicate to us Kalidas' ideals of a noble man and an honourable king. King Dilip was very virtuous, wise, had a good character, and possessed excellent intelligence. He acquired knowledge in a very young age, practiced equanimity in all his dealings, and was very kind, compassionate, merciful and gracious. During his reign, his subjects followed the principles of Dharma (orderly conduct) in all spheres of life, and hence there was peace and all-round prosperity.

King Dilip did not exact taxes beyond the means of his subjects, and just as the sun extracts water from the water-bodies on the earth in the form of water-vapour by the means of its rays, converts this water into clouds, and then gives the earth the water back in the form of rains for the general good of the earth and its inhabitants, so did king Dilip took taxes in such a way that none of his subjects suffered, and then used this collection for the welfare and well-being of the subjects themselves, without usurping any of it for his personal comforts and pleasures.

He spent his time religiously, and neither feared anyone nor caused anyone to fear him. But in spite of such a honourable life, he was sad that destiny was unfavourably inclined towards him as he had no child.

Hence, the central theme of the story of the first canto is the childless condition of the king. He decided to go to his family priest, sage Vashistha, and consult him as to the cause of destiny being so much against him as it prevented him from having an off-spring

to carry forward the name of the family and to inherit the crown of the kingdom after his death.

Putting his faithful ministers in charge of the kingdom, the king took his chaste wife, queen Sudakshina (who was a princess of the kingdom of Magadha), and went to the hermitage of sage Vashistha. Kalidas has used his poetical skills to good use to describe the way people used to travel on rural roads in ancient days, by graphically describing the route, the trees on the road-side, the jolting of the chariot as it traversed through the road to the hermitage, etc.

The royal pair reaches the hermitage in the evening where it is warmly welcomed by sage Vashistha and his wife Arundhati who assigned the royal couple a hut for the night's rest, with a few deer-skins to serve as beds. Vashistha discloses to them the real cause of their childless condition and directs them to propitiate the holy cow Surabhi who was neglected by the king because he passed by her without paying her due respects. She alone, the sage said, has the power to fulfil the desire of their heart to have an off-spring.

The sage also told him the reason why Surabhi felt annoyed by the king. Once when king Dilip was returning home after helping Indra, the lord of heaven, in a war involving the gods and the demons, he passed by the Kalpa Tree under whose shade the celestial cow Surabhi was resting. In his hurry to reach queen Sudakshina who wanted to have a bath because she was menstruating, the king neglected the holy cow by not stopping to pay obeisance to her. Thus, Surabhi felt insulted and cursed the king that he would not have a child son until he pleases her off-spring to get her blessings. The king was oblivious of this curse, and came to learn about it only when sage Vashistha told him about it.

Meanwhile, no sooner had sage Vashistha uttered the name of Surabhi, than her off-spring, the female calf named Nandini, came down to the hermitage from the forest where she had gone to graze. It was a good omen, and the sage told the king that he be rest assured now that his wish would be fulfilled.

The sage advised king Dilip that he and his wife, queen Sudakshina, should serve Surabhi's calf called Nandini so as to please its mother, and soon the royal couple would overcome the curse.

The king promised the sage that he would diligently follow his advise. Then the king and the queen retired for the night in the hut assigned to them.

With this background knowledge, now let us begin reading the full text of Canto 1 of Raghuvansham as follows:

Verse no. 1:

वागर्थाविव संपृक्तौ वागर्थप्रतिपत्तये।

जगतः पितरौ वन्दे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरौ॥ १-१

vāgarthāviva saṃpr̥ktau vāgarthapratipattaye |
jagataḥ pitarau vande pārvatīparameśvarau || 1-1

1-1. In order to enable myself to create a synergy between the words I would use and their meaning and relevance to the theme I wish to write upon, I first of all pay my deepest reverence to Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Parvati, who are the parents of this world and my revered deity, to seek their blessings and grace.

Their help is crucial for helping me in citing correct and relevant idioms and different tools of figure of speech (such as metaphors, similes and analogies) to properly describe the events associated with the theme and subject matter of my writing, as well as to be able to choose a more diverse array of pertinent words with a perfect meaning to give a flourish to my composition.

Verse no. 2:

क्व सूर्यप्रभवो वंशः क्व चाल्पविषया मतिः।
तितीर्षुर्दुस्तरं मोहादुदुपेनास्मि सागरम्॥ १-२

kva sūryaprabhavo vaṁśaḥ kva cālpaviṣayā matiḥ |
titīrṣurdustaraṁ mohāduḍupenāsmi sāgaram || 1-2

1-2. Where is a comparison between the glories, the majesty and the greatness of a dynasty descending from the Sun-God (known as the Solar Race), and the limited reach of my humble intellect, that I would be able to describe the majesty and magnificence of the former?

It is out of my ignorance and a scanty knowledge of the enormity of the task at hand that I am trying to cross the vastness of a fathomless ocean (representing the glory, the majesty and the greatness of the illustrious kings of the Solar Race) with the help of a small boat (representing my limited intellect and knowledge, as well as my limited skill with the language, that are all needed to describe this great Race so as to do justice to it)!

[Note--Kalidas explains why he seeks Lord Shiva's and goddess Parvati's blessings while attempting to write an epic poem about the great dynasty known as the Solar Race in which great and illustrious kings were born, and in which Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, too was born. It's like trying to cross the vast ocean in a boat, a dare-devilry with an uncertain end, but it may be made possible if Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati wishes it to be so. So, with this faith in his heart, and with the grace of Lord Shiva and mother Parvati, Kalidas says he has taken the plunge to navigate thorough an ocean representing the enormous glory and the greatness of the Solar Race.

Even the great poet Goswami Tulsidas, who had written the epic story of Lord Ram known as the famed 'Ram Charit Manas', also expressed a similar reservation, and he had sought the blessing of everyone, especially of his revered Lord Ram, to enable him to successfully narrate the divine story of the Lord. This is amply clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-14 that precede it.]

Verse no. 3:

मन्दः कवियशः प्रार्थी गमिष्याम्यपहास्यताम्।
 प्रांशुलभ्ये फले लोभादुद्बाहुरिव वामनः॥ १-३

mandah kaviyaśaḥ prārthī gamiṣyāmyapahāsyatām |
 prāṁśulabhye phale lobhādudbāhuriva vāmanaḥ || 1-3

1-3. I fear that I will become a butt of ridicule and make a clown of myself since I am trying to covet the status of a celebrity poet (a status too high for me), just like a dwarf stretching his arms upwards to reach the fruit of a tree that is easily accessible by a tall man.

[Note--Kalidas says that though he is not competent, yet he is trying to achieve the coveted status of an acclaimed poet, which is a fanciful dream. It is like attempting to get a fruit that is beyond his reach, and he harbours a doubt that he will make himself a joker and a laughing stock for the world in the end.]

Verse no. 4:

अथवा कृतवाग्द्वारे वंशेऽस्मिन्पूर्वसूरिभिः।
 मणौ वज्रसमुत्कीर्णे सूत्रस्येवास्ति मे गतिः॥ १-४

athavā kṛtavāgdvāre vaṁśe'sminpūrvasūribhiḥ |
 maṇau vajrasamutkīrṇe sūtrasyevāsti me gatiḥ || 1-4

1-4. But I have a hope because great poets who came before me had already written about this great and glorious dynasty of the Solar Race, and in a sense they have virtually created a minor hole (or a small doorway) for me through which I can peep through to see (or learn about) the details of this honourable dynasty, just like expert artisans pierce a hole through gems to pass a thread so that many such gems could be threaded together to form a priceless garland.

Therefore, my passage through this journey would be easy as I have great poets of the past whose works would serve to guide me, and just like the small bore made in a gem by expert artisans makes it easy for the thread to pass through it, so would the works of these great poets of the past help me in my journey as I can use their works as an example in my own writing.

[Note--Kalidas refers to sages Valmiki and Veda Vyas who have written the story of the Ramayana before him. While Valmiki's version is famous as the epic Ramayana, sage Veda Vyas' version is known as Adhyatma Ramayan. Kalidas has based his narration largely on these two versions of the Ramayana, but has given his version a unique shade of beauty, charm and flourish that are hallmarks of all the works of Kalidas.

Kalidas says that great poets of the past have shown the door to other poets so that they too can write about the glories of the Solar Race in which Lord Ram was born. And for that, all poets ought to thank such ancient poets such as Valmiki and Veda Vyas.

He stresses that though he himself has limited knowledge of the greatness of this great dynasty of kings, but for guidance he has other poets whose works will show him the way forward. Though he is but a small fish in the vastness of the ocean representing the glory of the Solar Race, yet it is often true that a small fish can easily creep through small crevices or holes in the rocks found under the surface of the ocean to reach the other side of it, or explore the hidden treasures locked inside the rock which larger fish can't access because they are not able to pass through the small hole. So in a way, being small is a boon instead of being a curse, because this humbleness and declared ignorance about the nuances of classical literature gives Kalidas the freedom to write in a way he wants, without bothering too much about the quality of his product, for if he succeeds in creating a masterpiece then the glory would be his, and if he fails in his endeavour then he can always say that he has already made it abundantly clear that he has no competence or expertise in this field, and was merely making an attempt to write something on which great poets of the past have already written extensively, and that he did it to try his luck to the best of his ability, without expecting any acclaim.]

Verse no. 5:

सोऽहमाजन्मशुद्धानामाफलोदयकर्मणाम्।

आसमुद्रक्षितीशानामानाकरथवर्त्मनाम्॥ १-५

so'hamājanmaśuddhānāmāphalodayakarmaṇām |
āsamudrakṣitīśānāmānākaraṭhavarṭmanām || 1-5

{Verse nos. 5-9 enumerate the qualities, the characters, the virtuousness and the conscientiousness of the kings of the Solar Race, also known as the Raghu dynasty.}

1-5. In spite of me (Kalidas) being incompetent to describe the stupendous glories, virtues, excellent characters and majesty of the righteous and conscientious kings of the Raghu dynasty, but, as I have already said earlier, I have learned poets who had come before me and who had written about these glorious kings extensively, and as such I have them as my guide and motivator, which in turn has encouraged me to try to write about these most noble and honourable kings who were impeccable from their births and had lived a fruitful life in accordance with the principle of righteousness, probity, propriety and conscientiousness.

These noble kings continued to make efforts till they achieved success in their endeavours.

They ruled over vast tracts of land stretching till the ocean, from one end of it to the other.

These kings were exceptionally righteous.

They had acquired such great mystical powers by the virtue of their exemplary life (by adhering to the principles of Dharma to such an extent) that they could take their chariots from the earth to heaven. {To wit, these kings had a right of passage to heaven, and even Indra, the lord of heaven, would not only welcome them but also seek their help whenever needed.}

Verse no. 6:

**यथाविधिहुताग्नीनां यथाकामार्चितार्थिनाम्।
यथापराधदण्डानां यथाकालप्रबोधिनाम्॥ १-६**

yathāvidhihutāgnīnām yathākāmārcitārthinām |
yathāparādhadaṇḍānām yathākālaprabodhinām || 1-6

1-6. These noble and honourable kings performed various fire sacrifices with great faith and diligence as part of their religious duty so that the Fire-God would be satisfied by their devotion, obeisance and offerings.

They were generous towards those who sought anything from them, and dealt compassionately with their appeals.

They gave punishment in accordance with the nature and seriousness of the offence, never making anyone suffer more than what the offender deserves for the transgressions of law, or the gravity of the crime committed by him or her. {It was not like 'one size fits all' kind of punishment, but the type punishment was determined by the nature of the crime and the seriousness of the offence.}

They were always vigilant towards their duties and responsibilities.

Verse no. 7:

**त्यागाय संभृतार्थानां सत्याय मितभाषिणाम्।
यशसे विजिगीषूणां प्रजायै गृहमेधिनाम्॥ १-७**

tyāgāya sambhṛtārthānām satyāya mitabhāṣiṇām |
yaśase vijigīṣūṇām prajāyai gṛhamedhinām || 1-7

1-7. These kings were very munificent as they accumulated wealth or riches with the purpose of making charities with them (and not for their own use, or for collecting material things of comforts and pleasures).

They spoke little, and were always vigilant that they spoke the truth and its principles were upheld.

They wished to have victory in a war for the sake of establishing their fame and extending their domain, as well as maintaining authority and hold over their realm, and not for the sake bloodshed or out of jealousy and malice towards inhabitants of another land¹.

They married only to get a progeny that would help carry forward the family's name and line, and not for sexual pleasures and derive sensual gratifications.

[Note--¹In ancient times, great kings and emperors were expected to wage occasional campaigns in order to maintain their authority and hold or grasp over their vast realms that stretched far beyond their capital cities and its surrounding land that was called their own kingdoms. If a king did not do so during his lifetime, then history recorded him as a

weak king, and the governors appointed by him to look after the vast realm began to usurp powers and often declared themselves independent. If such a thing happened, then the king would be accused of allowing the realms established by his forefathers to break away into splinter kingdoms, thereby reducing the glory and fame of the dynasty to which a particular king belonged.]

Verse no. 8:

**शैशवेऽभ्यस्तविद्यानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम्।
वार्धके मुनिवृत्तीनां योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम्॥ १-८**

śaiśave'bhyastavidyānāṃ yauvane viṣayaīṣiṇām |
vārdhake munivṛttīnām yogenānte tanutyajām || 1-8

1-8. The kings of the Solar Race diligently followed the system laid out by the scriptures for a person's life on earth by spending their early days in acquiring knowledge and gaining different skills, growing up to marry and start a family as well as do their duties as rulers in a conscientious and righteous way, then hand over the charge of the world and its affairs to their off-springs while themselves taking a backseat to act as advisors, and finally retiring to the forest to live like a hermit, and devote their time in meditation and contemplation to prepare themselves for their final exit from this world to attain liberation from the cycle of transmigration and obtain deliverance for their souls.

[Note--The scriptures divided the life of a person into four periods as follows: (i) the first quarter called the teen age and adolescence was meant for studies and acquisition of various skills and craftsmanship that would prepare the person to meet the demands of life; (ii) the adulthood when he was expected to marry, raise a family, fulfil all his worldly responsibilities; (iii) the third quarter of the old age when a person should withdraw himself from worldly affairs, hand over his responsibilities to his off-springs, and lead a quiet life as an advisor while pursuing his spiritual aspirations; and (iv) the fourth quarter when a person should completely withdraw from the material world and spend the last days of his life like an ascetic or hermit, doing meditation and contemplating on his own 'self', the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and prepare himself to make a peaceful and quiet exit from the mortal world to achieve liberation and deliverance for himself. So therefore, the kings of this exalted race followed this system diligently.]

Verse no. 9:

**रघूनामन्वयं वक्ष्ये तनुवाग्विभवोऽपि सन्।
तद्गुणैः कर्णमागत्य चापलाय प्रचोदितः॥ १-९**

raghūnāmanvayaṃ vakṣye tanuvāgvibhavo'pi san |
tadguṇaiḥ karṇamāgatya cāpalāya pracoditaḥ || 1-9

1-9. Since this race of kings known as the 'Raghu Race' was so exemplarily righteous, conscientious, noble and honourable, I (Kalidas) was spontaneously attracted by their meritorious life, their fame and excellence of character so much that I have decided to narrate their life and time to purify my mind, even though I am aware of my limited knowledge and literary skills.

Verse no. 10:

तं सन्तः श्रोतुमर्हन्ति सदसद्व्यक्तिहेतवः।

हेम्नः संलक्ष्यते ह्यग्नौ विशुद्धिः श्यामिकाऽपि वा॥ १-१०

htaṁ santaḥ śrotumarhanti sadasadvaktihetavaḥ |
emnaḥ saṁlakṣyate hyagnau viśuddhiḥ śyāmikā'pi vā || 1-10

1-10. Wise, sagacious, erudite and learned people are the ones who are competent to hear the stories of these kings of the Raghu dynasty because such people can distinguish between the good and the bad, between what is meritorious and what is not, just like the purity and impurity of gold is best determined when it is put into the fire for testing its purity.

[Note--Kalidas says that although he says that he has decided to narrate the life and time of the kings of the Raghu dynasty because he was attracted by their goodness and noble character, yet whether he is right or wrong in making this judgement is to be decided by wise and learned people who would read what he has written to arrive at a conclusion themselves. But by inference this means that Kalidas was very confident that sagacious and knowledgeable people would agree with him about the greatness of the kings of the Raghu dynasty, and his choice of writing about them at length.

Just like the purity of gold is known when it is put into the fire, so likewise the greatness of the kings of the Raghu dynasty will be known when many wise and learned people read about them and determine themselves about their greatness, and not because Kalidas says something.

In this analogy, the learned people are likened to the fire, while the stories related to the rulers of the Raghu dynasty are likened to the sample of gold. Let these learned people themselves judge whether or not these kings were great.]

Verse no. 11:

वैवस्वतो मनुर्नाम माननीयो मनीषिणाम्।

आसीन्महीक्षितामाद्यः प्रणवश्छन्दसामिव॥ १-११

vaivasvato manurnāma mānanīyo manīṣiṇām |
āsīnmahīkṣitāmādyah praṇavaśchandasaṁmiva || 1-11

1-11. According to scholars and wise men, the first king of the human race was known as 'Vaivasvat-Manu'. He was like the Sun-God in the human race as all great kings owe their origin to him, and hence called the descendants of the Solar Race, just like the word 'OM' which is the first word pronounced in the Vedas and refers to the glories of the Supreme Being represented by the Sun-God shining brilliantly in the sky, and all the rest of the verses of the Vedas follow the word OM.

[Note--Everything was dark and frigid in the beginning of creation. When the first spark of life was ignited, it needed energy to sustain and propagate its self. This task was done by the Sun that gave light and energy to the nascent creation, because it is obvious that without the heat and light of the Sun, no life can exist in this world. So therefore, just like the Sun in the sky is regarded as the forefather of creation in a symbolic way and controls its existence, so is Vaivasvat-Manu regarded as the forefather of the human race and controls or regulates its working by appointing kings in this world.

Further, to cite the example of the Vedas, the first scripture, which start by pronouncing the word 'OM' dedicated to the Supreme Being, who in turn is represented by the Sun-God for its brilliance and radiance, so is the case of Vaivasvat Manu who occupies the same stature amongst the human race as the word OM occupies in the Vedas--i.e. most worthy, respected and the first to come into being. And just like the case of the verses of the Vedas that follow OM, the rest of the human race followed Vaivasvat Manu.

To wit, Manu was the progenitor of the human race on earth just like the Sun was the primary progenitor of this creation at the celestial level. Again, just like the word OM which is the first word pronounced in the Vedas and all the rest of the verses follow it, so likewise the human race followed Manu. And just like the Sun regulates life on earth with its light and heat, so do the kings who descended from Manu regulated and controlled life of the human race on earth.]

Verse no. 12:

तदन्वये शुद्धिमति प्रसूतः शुद्धिमत्तरः।
दिलीप इति राजेन्दुरिन्दुः क्षीरनिधाविव॥ १-१२

tadanvaye śuddhimati prasūtaḥ śuddhimattaraḥ |
dilīpa iti rājendurinduḥ kṣīranidhāviva || 1-12

1-12. In the immaculate race of kings descending from Vaivasvat Manu was born a famous king named Dilip who was taintless and glorious like the full moon in the night sky, a king whose glories and virtues were extolled and compared to the full moon as the latter is regarded as a pitcher of Soma (an invigorating and nourishing drink) that emerged from the celestial ocean of milk (during its churning by the gods and the demons).

[Note--Just as the moon is regarded as a heavenly pitcher of Soma, a drink that is nourishing and invigorating, so was king Dilip who too was highly respected and

honoured because he was full of good virtues and excellent characters, and his presence gave cheer to his subjects just like the appearance of the moon in the sky gives cheer to the people on earth who are weary and need emotional peace.

Again, just like the celestial ocean of milk, known as the Kshir Sagar, is deemed to be pure and soothing unlike the ocean on earth which is sour and corrosive, the family of king Dilip too was a worthy family possessing excellent virtues, a family that had a great pedigree as it owed its origin to the Sun-God and the honourable Vaivasvat Manu.]

Verse no. 13:

व्यूढोरस्को वृषस्कन्धः शालप्रांशुर्महाभुजः।

आत्मकर्मक्षमं देहं क्षात्रो धर्म इवाश्रितः॥ १-१३

vyūḍhorasko vṛṣaskandhaḥ śālaprāṁśurmahābhujah |
ātmakarmakṣamaṁ dehaṁ kṣātro dharma ivāśritaḥ || 1-13

1-13. King Dilip had a magnificent personality with a broad chest like that of a healthy bull, and a tall stature with high shoulders and long arms like that of the majestic Sal tree. {It is a tall hardwood tree with robust branches. It is known as the Indian dammer, also the Shakua tree, and its botanical name is Shorea robusta.}

He stood tall in the community of kings and was renowned for his heroic deeds and valour befitting the honour of the Kshatriya race of great kings. It seemed that he was a personified form of the deity representing the Dharma of the princely race.

{To wit, king Dilip embodied all the virtues, characters and good qualities of famous kings who were valorous, brave, courageous and conscientious, as well as diligent followers of the principles of Dharma, i.e. the laws of righteousness, probity, propriety, and goodness in thought and conduct.}

Verse no. 14:

सर्वतिरिक्त सारेण सर्वतेजोऽभिभाविना |

स्थितः सर्वोन्नतेनोर्वी क्रान्तवा मेरुरिवात्मना ॥ १-१४

sarvātirikta sāreṇa sarvatejo'bhibhāvinā |
sthitaḥ sarvonnatenorvīm krāntavā merurivātmanā || 1-14

1-14. King Dilip was mighty and un-comparable in every respect--he was more strong and powerful than anyone else, he could subdue everyone by the sheer force of his might, he had a remarkable physique that stood tall and majestic amongst all others of his time, and like the Sumeru mountain¹ he dominated the earth by his imposing presence.

[Note--¹The Sumeru mountain: The Meru mountain is also called 'Sumeru'—the 'golden one'. The word 'Meru' literally means one that reflects light like a mirror or crystal. It is described in the Purans as the fabulous mythological mountain that forms the axis of the

whole world. It is much like mount Olumpus of Hindu mythology. All the planets revolve around it. It is compared to the cup or the seed-vessel of the lotus, the leaves of which symbolize the different Dvipas or continents and islands. The holy river Ganges from the heaven on its summit, and from there it divides into four streams and flows down to the rest of the world. The four Lokpals or the custodians of the four directions of the celestial compass occupy the corresponding face of this mountain which is said to be made of gold and glittering gems.

Its height is said to be one lakh Yojans which is equivalent to roughly 8 lakh miles. [1 lakh = 1,00,000 units; 1 Yojan = approx. 8 miles.]

Out of this huge size, 16,000 Yojans (8 x 16,000 miles) is under the ground, and 84,000 Yojans (8 x 84,000 miles) above the ground. On its top there is a flat plateau of approx. 32,000 Yojans (8 x 32,000 miles). It is here that Brahma the creator and his mind-born sons such as Daksha and the Saptarishis live. [refer Mahabharat, Vanaparva, 162; Bhagvata, 5/16.]

It is situated in the mystical Jambudvipa (the huge island by the name of 'Jambu'), and Bharatvarsha (India) is said to be to its south. The abode of Lord Shiva known as Mt. Kailash, which is presently located in the northern reaches of the Himalayan mountain range, is said to be the same Mt. Meru.

The creator Brahma resides on its summit, and it is the meeting place of Gods, semi-Gods such as Gandharvas, and exalted sages and seers who have attained Brahmhood.]

Verse no. 15:

आकारसदृशप्रज्ञः प्रज्ञया सदृशागमः।

आगमैः सदृशारम्भ आरम्भसदृशोदयः॥ १-१५

ākārasadrśaprajñāḥ prajñayā sadrśāgamah |
āgamaiḥ sadrśārambha ārambhasadrśodayah || 1-15

1-15. King Dilip's wisdom and intelligence matched his towering physical personality. He put to good practice his wisdom and intelligence while implementing the principles of governance and conduct in all spheres of life. He made all his efforts in accordance with the relevant mandates and principles laid down by the different Shastras (scriptures that are deemed to be repositories of expert knowledge pertaining to different fields of activities). And as a result of these combined qualities, king Dilip would be rewarded with relevant fruits that reflected his virtuousness and greatness in every field of life.

[Note--King Dilip had a magnificent physical personality. He also had magnificent wisdom and intelligence. His activities and conduct were always in accordance with the guidelines set in the scriptures. And therefore, all his efforts would bear good results that concurred with the loftiness and immaculacy of his character.]

Verse no. 16:

**भीमकान्तैर्नृपगुणैः स बभूवोपजीविनाम्।
अधृष्यश्चाभिगम्यश्च यादोरत्नैरिवार्णवः॥ १-१६**

bhīmakāntairnṛpaṇaiḥ sa babhūvopajīvinām |
adhr̥ṣyaścābhigamyaśca yādoratnairivārṇavaḥ || 1-16

1-16. King Dilip's formidable reputation as a valiant king who was invincible, fearless and courageous, qualities behooving of mighty kings who brooked no challenge to their authority, he instilled fear amongst his adversaries and enemies who kept a safe distance from him just like the fear of the roaring ocean, with its crocodiles, sharks etc., keeps seafarers away from it, while at the same time his excellent character of being compassionate, tolerant, generous and kind, which were like the many gems hidden in the ocean, would make him easily accessible to those who were in distress and sought help from him, for he would readily use his wealth for charitable purposes.

Verse no. 17:

**रेखामात्रमपि क्षुण्णादा मनोर्वर्त्मनः परम्।
न व्यतीयुः प्रजास्तस्य नियन्तुर्नेमिवृत्तयः॥ १-१७**

rekhāmātramapi kṣuṇṇādā manorvartmanah param |
na vyatīyuh prajāstasya niyanturnemivṛttayaḥ || 1-17

1-17. Since king Dilip himself was very diligent in living an orderly life that was regulated in accordance with the laws of Dharma, never violating any of the principles of goodness, righteousness, probity and propriety, his subjects too followed his example by living an orderly and regulated life, just like the four wheels of a chariot that always move together in sync with each other and follow the direction in which the chariot itself is moving, never moving haphazardly or deviating from their path to suit their whim and fancy.

[Note--The coordination between the wheels and the chariot is obvious, for a charioteer cannot drive a chariot if its wheels become loose and start wobbling. Likewise, king Dilip had an excellent rapport with his subjects that made it possible for him to run the affairs of his kingdom smoothly and without any obstacles. He set an example for others by the conduct of his own life, and the subjects reflected his virtuousness by leading a righteous way of life themselves.

This verse points to the established adage that says 'if the ruler of a country is good, the citizens too would be good, while if the ruler himself is corrupt and fallen, then nothing good can be expected from the citizens of that country'.]

Verse no. 18:

प्रजानामेव भूत्यर्थं स ताभ्यो बलिमग्रहीत्।
सहस्रगुणमुत्स्रष्टुमादत्ते हि रसं रविः॥ १-१८

prajānāmeva bhūtyartham sa tābhyo balimagrahīt |
sahasraguṇamutsraṣṭumādatte hi rasam raviḥ || 1-18

1-18. King Dilip collected taxes from his rich subjects with the aim of the welfare and well-being of all his subjects, just like the sun that extracts water in the form of vapour from rich water bodies on earth (such as the ocean, lakes and rivers), which is then converted into clouds, which in turn returns the water to the earth in the form of rain that covers a wide area for the general good of the inhabitants of the world.

[Note--King Dilip never taxed his subjects beyond their means, and motivated the rich subjects to voluntarily contribute to the state corpus so that the collected money could be ploughed back into the kingdom for the general good of every citizen. He never used coercive methods for tax collection, and neither did he use the collected taxes for his personal comforts and pleasures. Whatever revenue he got was used for the welfare and well-being of his subjects. As a result, every able citizen willingly paid the due tax, knowing fully well that he was contributing for the general good of the society, and the tax that he paid was more like a contribution to a charity fund.

In this verse, king Dilip is compared to the sun, and the taxes he collected and used for the general good of the society to the water that evaporates due to the heat of the sun from selected water-bodies such as the ocean, lakes and rivers, only to be converted into clouds and returning back to earth in the form of rain that benefits a large population spread over a large area of the earth.]

Verse no. 19:

सेना परिच्छदस्तस्य द्वयमेवार्थसाधनम्।
शास्त्रेष्वकुण्ठिता बुद्धिर्मौर्वी धनुषि चातता॥ १-१९

senā paricchadastasya dvayamevārthasāadhanam |
śāstreṣvakunṭhitā buddhirmaurvī dhanuṣi cātātā || 1-19

1-19. King Dilip's army served only a ceremonial and formal function, as his real strength lay in his expertise in all matters related to statecraft and diplomacy as described in the scriptures, as well as his own strength of arm and the formidable nature of his bow and arrow.

[Note--King Dilip had an army just because a king must have it, and to serve certain ceremonial duties such as marching alongside him for royal functions, such as when some guest arrives to meet Dilip, or during some kind of sport, holding his royal umbrella, and adding a dash of colour and a sense of grandeur and majesty to the king, as well as some functions as part of good governance, such as guarding his forts and

palaces, maintaining protocols of discipline and order within his kingdom, and so on and so forth. All these are civil duties, and not military ones.

The real function of any army is to confront an enemy in the battle-field and defeat him, for which there arose no occasion. It is because, first, king Dilip's reputation as a fearless, courageous and invincible warrior was so great that no competitor king ever dared to attack him; secondly, his diplomatic policies were such that he had no enemies who would create troubles for him; and thirdly, he ran his kingdom in such a way that every single citizen was happy and contented, and therefore there were no betrayals, treachery, infidelity, insurgency or back-stabbing amongst the rank and file of his subjects. If a neighbouring king tried to implant a spy, the latter would be caught by the citizens themselves, taken to king Dilip who would bring him to justice.

Even the kings of the surrounding kingdoms were aware of this quality, and they feared that if they asked their own armies to attack king Dilip's kingdom, there would be revolt amongst their soldiers who would refuse to attack their brethren in another kingdom where the king (in this Dilip) is a very honourable man who looks after his subjects well, and if too much pressure was exerted on these soldiers they would threaten to resign and re-locate to king Dilip's kingdom.

Even gods would support king Dilip against his enemy if a war was imposed on him.]

Verse no. 20:

तस्य संवृतमन्त्रस्य गूढाकारेङ्गितस्य च।

फलानुमेयाः प्रारम्भाः संस्काराः प्राक्तना इव॥ १-२०

tasya samvṛtamantrasya gūḍhākāreṅgitasya ca |

phalānumeyāḥ prārambhāḥ saṁskārāḥ prāktanā iva || 1-20

1-20. King Dilip had a reserved nature (which was a conscious decision on his part as a strategy of state-craft). He never disclosed his thoughts and concepts to anyone, nor did he made known his policies, strategies and planning on any matter. He adopted a stoic posture and revealed nothing, which in turn helped him to keep his options open and his adversaries guessing, leaving them unprepared to play foul with king Dilip's planning and undermine its implementation in order to undercut him and give him a bad name.

As a result, what he conceived and planned to do, and what his aim or objective was in doing something became clear only when the result was known.

It was like the case of a man not being aware of what had happened in his previous or past life that has resulted in something happening to him during his current or present life. This phenomenon is called 'Prarabdha' (pronounced as 'Praa-rabdha') where some deeds done by a person in his past life come to bear fruits in the person's present life, which often leaves the person confused and bewildered as the current developments in his life are not within his powers to stop nor had he planned anything about them, and neither were they expected under the present circumstances or situations. They seem to come to him suddenly and like a bolt from heaven.

[Note--Like a person's Prarabdha, i.e. the deeds done by him in his previous life, remains secret from him and comes to his knowledge only when he sees the result of his past deeds in his present life, so likewise the planning and strategy of king Dilip remained secret from others, no one could guess what was in his mind, and were known only when the result of the king's actions bore fruit.]

Verse no. 21:

**जुगोपात्मानमत्रस्तः भेजे धर्ममनातुरः।
अग्रधनुराददे सोऽर्थमसक्तः सुखमन्वभूत्॥ १-२१**

jugopātmānamatrastah bheje dharmamanāturaḥ |
agrḍhnurādade so'rthamasaktaḥ sukhamanvabhūt || 1-21

1-21. King Dilip protected his subjects fearlessly and without prejudice of any kind.

He conserved his body and tried to be free from falling ill or become diseased with the sole purpose that he could employ his physical body in doing Dharma and what was expected from him to do as a king (such as taking care of his kingdom and its subjects, performing religious rites, and in general ensuring that there is law and order in the society).

He created wealth without being greedy (and this was evident in the way he collected taxes and used them as described in verse no. 18 herein above).

He enjoyed the comforts that come naturally to him for being a king of a mighty kingdom, but without getting unduly attached to them or yearning for them. {He enjoyed the comforts and pleasures of a kingly life but with detachment and dispassion. He never indulged in them, nor did he yearn for material charms and hoarding things of material comfort and pleasure. If he had access to anything, he would use it, and if he did not get anything he would neither miss it or greed for it. He practiced self-restraint, self-discipline, detachment, dispassion and equanimity in his personal life. He never succumbed to temptations of any kind, nor desired for sensual gratification.}

Verse no. 22:

**ज्ञाने मौनं क्षमा शक्तौ त्यागे श्लाघाविपर्ययः।
गुणा गुणानुबन्धित्वात्तस्य सप्रसवा इव॥ १-२२**

jñāne maunaṁ kṣamā śaktau tyāge ślāghāviparyayaḥ |
guṇā guṇānubandhitvāttasya saprasavā iva || 1-22

1-22. King Dilip practiced the grand virtue of remaining quiet and un-boastful even though he had immense knowledge in every field. {He was never haughty or boastful about his skills, sagacity, erudition and acumen; knowledge had made him calm, balanced and restrained. He would speak little, and he would not ridicule anyone for lack or inferiority of knowledge.}

Although he had immense powers by which he could punish offenders to any extent he wished, yet he believed in, and practiced, the virtue of forgiveness, mercy and compassion. {This quality of his endeared him to his subjects. But it did not mean weakness or fear on his part, but it was a virtue that made him famous.}

While making charities, he never wanted himself to be praised for it. {He believed that whatever he had belonged to the society, and he was merely a custodian. So therefore, there was nothing special in his making charities as it was part of his duties as a ruler and custodian of the kingdom.}

These above-mentioned qualities and virtues were inherent to king Dilip's character and nature, and not for show. He was not pretending to be virtuous by practicing any one of these virtues, but they came to him naturally and were part of his in-born character. And therefore, these natural qualities in king Dilip were like siblings of a man, them being related to each other since birth.

Verse no. 23:

**अनाकृष्टस्य विषयैर्विद्यानाम् प्रारदृश्वनः।
तस्य धर्मरतेरासीद्वृद्धत्वं जरसा विना॥ १-२३**

anākṛṣṭasya viṣayairvidyānām prāradṛśvanah |
tasya dharmaraterāsīdvṛddhatvaṁ jarasā vinā || 1-23

1-23. King Dilip was never under the influence of sense objects of this material world; they didn't attract him nor did he yearn for them. {Refer also to verse no. 21 herein above.}

He was an expert in all fields of knowledge as well as well-versed in the principles of Dharma (i.e. righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, good conduct and thought).

Although he was not old by physical age, yet his actions, thoughts, intelligence and wisdom were so mature that he appeared to be like an aged sage.

Verse no. 24:

**प्रजानां विनयाधानाद्रक्षणाद्भरणादपि।
स पिता पितरस्तासां केवलं जन्महेतवः॥ १-२४**

prajānām vinayādhānādrakṣaṇādbharaṇādapi |
sa pitā pitarastāsām kevalam janmahetavaḥ || 1-24

1-24. The subjects of the kingdom treated king Dilip as if he was their de-facto father because he performed all the duties that a father is expected to carry out with respect to his children, such as teaching them the righteous and noble way of living, protecting and caring for them and their rights, and looking after their welfare and well-being in a general way.

The actual biological fathers of the subjects were merely the ones who gave them birth, but in contrast and in reality, it was king Dilip who was universally respected and adored by everyone as a father in the real context of the world.

Verse no. 25:

**स्थित्यै दण्डयतो दण्ड्यान्परिणेतुः प्रसूतये।
अप्यर्थकामौ तस्यास्तां धर्म एव मनीषिणः॥ १-२५**

sthityai daṇḍayato daṇḍyānpariṇetuḥ prasūtaye |
apyarthakāmau tasyāstāṁ dharma eva manīṣiṇaḥ || 1-25

1-25. King Dilip gave punishment to those who violated the rules of law only with the intent of maintaining discipline and order in the society (because if violators were allowed to go unpunished, then there would be a breakdown of law and order in the kingdom, and the society as a whole would suffer for the mischief of a few).

He married only with the purpose of having a progeny that would carry forward the line of the family and inherit the crown of the kingdom, and not with the purpose of sexual pleasure or sensual gratification. {The king would teach this principle to his subjects also as part of his duties when he would address them in meetings and gatherings.}

For the scholarly king Dilip, fastidiously following the principles of Dharma (right behaviour, thought and conduct) was the meaning and aim of leading a good and fruitful life.

Verse no. 26:

**दुदोह गां स यज्ञाय सस्याय मघवा दिवम्।
सम्पद्विनियमेनोभौ दधतुर्भुवनद्वयम्॥ १-२६**

dudoha gāṁ sa yajñāya sasyāya maghavā divam |
sampadviniyamenobhau dadhaturbhuvanadvayam || 1-26

1-26. King Dilip milked the cow (dudoha gāṁ) represented by the earth (i.e. he extracted wealth from the earth) for the purpose of carrying out his religious duties such as performance of sacrifices (to offer oblations to the gods in heaven, along with his duty to look after the welfare and well-being of his people, and making charities), even as Indra, the lord of heaven, used his authority to milk or use his heavenly resources in the sky to produce rain so that life on earth is sustained.

So, while king Dilip made efforts to sustain the gods in heaven by making offerings during the rituals of the sacrifice, Indra returned his noble gestures by showering rain from the sky so that the earth is provided with water which is an essential element of life in this world.

Hence, both these two kings, i.e. Dilip and Indra, helped each other in serving the cause of the Supreme Being by being instrumental in protecting, sustaining and taking care of the Lord's creation in their own domain of responsibility, such as the earth and the heaven respectively.

Verse no. 27:

न किलानुनयुस्तस्य राजानो रक्षितुर्यशः।

व्यावृत्ता यत्परस्वेभ्यः श्रुतौ तस्करता स्थिता॥ १-२७

na kilānunayustasya rājāno rakṣituryaśaḥ |

vyāvṛttā yatparasvebhyaḥ śrutau taskaratā sthitā || 1-27

1-27. In the reign of kind Dilip, the words stealing, cheating, greed and theft were merely words that were only found or mentioned in, or confined to the pages of dictionaries and law-books (that prescribed punishments for such crimes), for he never put them into practice, he never used such unrighteous and unscrupulous means to acquire wealth, to become rich, to fill his treasury and coffers and to lead an extravagant life of luxury and pomp. This is why none of the other kings during that period could ever compare themselves with king Dilip (for they employed unrighteous methods of force and threat to extract taxes from their subjects, to usurp their wealth and property in case they did not comply and give enough to satisfy the king's greed, and then use such acquired money to enrich themselves, fill their coffers, and live a life of luxury and dissipation suited to their whims and fancies, unbothered about the welfare of their subjects or their sufferings).

[Note—There was prosperity and financial wellness in his kingdom so that there was no need for anyone to commit theft.

This verse implies that whatever money king Dilip took from his subjects by way of taxes or other means of generating revenue, all of it was used for their welfare. In this context, refer to verse no. 18 herein above.

Some funds were used for direct welfare schemes, and some were used to please Indra, the king of gods and the controller of rains, so that Indra, in turn, would shower abundance of rain to keep the land fertile and well-watered, and at the same time prevail upon other gods to be in good humour towards the subjects of the kingdom of Dilip, bless the latter and grant them abundant largesse in accordance with the powers these gods possessed. Whereas the other kings used such taxes and other means of revenues for their selfish needs, to fill their treasury and coffers, and lead a life of luxury and pomp. To wit, none of the kings of that period could match the noble virtues of benevolence, magnanimity, charity, sympathy and empathy that king Dilip possessed.]

Verse no. 28:

द्वेष्योऽपि सम्मतः शिष्टस्तस्यार्तस्य यथौषधम्।

त्याज्यो दुष्टः प्रियोऽप्यासीदङ्गुलीवोरगक्षता॥ १-२८

dveṣyo'pi sammataḥ śiṣṭastasyārtasya yathauṣadham |
tyājyo duṣṭaḥ priyo'pyāsidaṅgulīvoragakṣatā || 1-28

1-28. If some person was a man of principles, if he was noble and righteous, if he possessed good and positive qualities and characters, then such a person was very dear to king Dilip who liked him, even though that person might be Dilip's adversary or opposed to him—just like the case of a wise patient willing to take a medicine that would be beneficial for his health inspite of that medicine having bitter, pungent, sour or any other kind of unpalatable taste.

On the other hand, if a person lacked good characters and principles, if he possessed negative qualities of any kind, then in such a case king Dilip would dislike him and prefer to distance himself from such a person although that person might be close to the king and seemingly useful to the latter from worldly perspectives (such as his kin, ministers, courtiers, servants etc.)—just like the case of man preferring to have his finger amputated if it has been bitten by a snake although the finger is part of his own body and he loves it very much (because otherwise he would die due to the snake's poison spreading over other parts of his body).

[Note—The implication of this verse is very clear. It simply means that king Dilip favoured the virtues of righteousness, goodness of character, noble qualities and principles in a man over all other considerations. Hence, even if someone was opposed to him in worldly matters but possessed good characters and excellent principles, king Dilip would favour that person and deal with him accordingly. On the other hand, he would like to shun someone who had bad characters, who was unrighteous, un-principled, unscrupulous and deceitful.]

Verse no. 29:

तं वेधा विदधे नूनं महाभूतसमाधिना।
तथा हि सर्वे तस्यासन्पारार्थैकफला गुणाः॥ १-२९

taṁ vedhā vidadhe nūnaṁ mahābhūtasamādhinā |
tathā hi sarve tasyāsanparārthaikaphalā guṇāḥ || 1-29

1-29. It seems that the creator Brahma had used all the five basic elements of creation, such as earth, water, fire, air and sky, to mould king Dilip out of them, because he was naturally inclined to serve others selflessly just like these five elements.

[Note--All these five elements of Nature use themselves for the welfare of others in creation. 'Earth' provides habitat, herbs, minerals and food. 'Water' is essential for life as it acts as a liquid that provides lubrication, wards off heat, and also acts as a solvent for nutrients which are easily dissolved in it to be of any use for the living being. 'Fire' keeps the world warm and energised; it is needed to cook food and keep the world from turning into a frigid wasteland of ice and glaciers. 'Air' is needed to breathe; it is a carrier of oxygen and other gases, and helps to carry clouds from one end of the earth to another.

Without air life would be choked to death. And lastly, the 'sky' as a vast habitat that contains in it everything that exists, including the sun, the earth and other planets. Everything in existence is lodged in the sky.

But the important point with regard to their relevance with king Dilip is that all these elements are selfless in their service of the Lord's creation, benefiting nothing themselves by this service, just like the case of king Dilip whose life was dedicated to the welfare of his subjects, and he did nothing with a selfish motive.

Besides this analogy, Kalidas has drawn from the basic doctrine of metaphysics that states that the gross body of a living being consists of these five basic elements, and at the time of death the gross body disintegrates so that all these elements devolve back into their primary form, thereby setting the Atma, the true 'self' of the creature, free from the cage represented by the gross body made up of these elements.]

Verse no. 30:

**स वेलावप्रवलायां परिखीकृतसागराम्।
अनन्यशासनामुर्वी शशासैकपुरीमिव॥ १-३०**

sa velāvapravalayām parikhīkṛtasāgarām |
ananyaśāsanāmurvīm śaśaśaikapurīmiva || 1-30

1-30. King Dilip ruled over a vast tract of the earth, extending from one shore of the ocean to the other shore, like an emperor. The ocean itself acted as a gigantic moat around his fort-like realm to protect it from all the sides. Thus, he was a de-facto 'emperor' of this world, with no one to challenge his authority. He ruled this vast realm like an ordinary king would rule his own city.

[Note-- Saying that Dilip ruled over the land stretching from one shore of the ocean to the other shore is merely a figure of speech to emphasise how great and powerful he was. Like great emperors, his writ extended far beyond the physical boundaries of his kingdom of Ayodhya. Obviously there were many other kingdoms and kings on this earth, but none was a match for Dilip's kingdom and his authority. Verse no. 30 herein below says that he married the princess of the kingdom of Magadha, which clearly implies that there were other kingdoms besides his own kingdom of Ayodhya.]

{All the verses till now, from verse no. 12 --till verse no. 30 enumerate the virtues and glories of king Dilip. Now, from the next verse onwards we shall read about his married life and how he felt frustrated in not having an off-spring, and later on what advice his royal priest, sage Vashistha, gave him to overcome his dilemma.}

Verse no. 31:

**तस्य दाक्षिण्यरूढेन नाम्ना मगधवंशजा।
पत्नी सुदक्षिणेत्यासीदध्वरस्येव दक्षिणा॥ १-३१**

tasya dākṣiṇyarūḍhena nāmnā magadhavaṁśajā |
patnī sudakṣiṇetyāsīdadhvarasyeva dakṣiṇā || 1-31

1-31. King Dilip had a wife (i.e. his queen) named Sudakshina (sudakṣiṇā). She was a princess of the line of kings ruling the kingdom of Magadha (magadhavaṁśajā). She was well educated, polite, had an excellent pedigree, and was well-versed in royal matters and etiquette so much so that king Dilip felt that he was very fortunate to have such a wise and erudite princess as his consort.

Queen Sudakshina was like 'Dakshina' (dakṣiṇā) which represents the successful culmination of the sacred Vedic ritual of the fire sacrifice, known as the Yagya¹. {King Dilip viewed queen Sudakshina as a rewarded for his righteous way of life.}

[Note--¹At the successful end of a fire sacrifice when the patron's wishes are fulfilled, he makes charities and gives donation as a mark of his gratitude and thankfulness to all concerned, including the priests and the gods to whom the offerings were made during the process of the sacrifice. The word 'dakshina' refers to the offerings and donations thus made. Dakshina symbolises the success of the endeavour of the fire sacrifice as well as attainment of desired result. So likewise, queen Sudakshina, with all her excellent virtues and qualities, also symbolised the reward that king Dilip was granted for his virtuous life and excellent character as has already been described in previous verse nos. 11-29 herein above.

Just as Vedic rituals such as the fire sacrifices and charities go hand-in-hand and are inseparable from one another, the latter in fact representing the reward that the chief patron gives to the priests and gods for the success of the ritual, so was the case of king Dilip and queen Sudakshina who not only complemented each other in virtues and good qualities, but the queen was like a reward awarded by the gods to the king for his excellent life of munificence, honour, nobility, charity, compassion, adherence to the laws of Dharma, and goodness in all spheres.]

Verse no. 32:

कलत्रवन्तमात्मानमवरोधे महत्यपि।

तया मेने मनस्विन्या लक्ष्म्या च वसुधाधिपः॥ १-३२

kalatravantamātmānamavarodhe mahatyapi |
tayā mene manasvinyā lakṣmyā ca vasudhādhīpaḥ || 1-32

1-32. Though king Dilip, the lord of the earth (vasudhādhīpaḥ), had many beauties in his ladies' quarters (because it was the norm of those days when kings were permitted to patronise many ladies in the female quarters of their palaces), yet after marrying Sudakshina he treated her as his true queen and companion, and gave her due respect as being a representative of the deity of the kingdom.

Verse no. 33:

तस्यामात्मानुरूपायामात्मजन्मसमुत्सुकः।

विलम्बितफलैः कालं स निनाय मनोरथैः॥ १-३३

tasyāmātmānurūpāyāmātmajanmasamutsukaḥ |
vilambitaphalaiḥ kālaṁ sa nināya manorathaiḥ || 1-33

1-33. King Dilip had a desire to have a son from his queen Sudakshina, and waited patiently for this desire to bear fruits just like someone entering into an enterprise that takes time to succeed and bear rewards.

{Any effort takes time to produce a positive result, and this result cannot be obtained instantly. So likewise, king Dilip waited patiently for his queen Sudakshina to bear a child.}

Verse no. 34:

सन्तानार्थाय विधये स्वभुजादवतारिता।

तेन धूर्जगतो गुर्वी सचिवेषु निचिक्षिपे॥ १-३४

santānārthāya vidhaye svabhujādatārītā |
tena dhūṛjagato gurvī saciveṣu nicikṣipe || 1-34

1-34. King Dilip decided to make special efforts to beget a son. So, in pursuance of this desire, he delegated the burden of taking care of the routine affairs of the kingdom to his trusted ministers, and himself took time off to fulfill his wish.

Verse no. 35:

अथाभ्यर्च विधातारं प्रयतौ पुत्रकामया।

तौ दम्पती वसिष्ठस्य गुरोर्जग्मतुराश्रमम्॥ १-३५

athābhyarca vidhātāraṁ prayatau putrakāmayā |
tau dampatī vasiṣṭhasya gurorjagmaturāśramam || 1-35

1-35. After that, the royal couple offered worship to Lord Brahma, the creator, and proceeded to the hermitage of sage Vashistha, the royal priest and advisor of the kingdom in religious and other relevant matters.

Verse no. 36:

स्निग्धगम्भीरनिर्घोषमेकं स्यन्दनमाश्रितौ।

प्रावृषेण्यं पयोवाहं विद्युदैरारताविव॥ १-३६

snigdhaḡambhīranirghoṣamekaṁ syandanamāśritau |
prāvṛṣeṇyaṁ payovāhaṁ vidyudairāratāviva || 1-36

1-36. Riding the same magnificent chariot which moved majestically, the two, i.e. king Dilip and his queen Sudakshina, headed towards the hermitage of sage Vashistha, just like a large bank of rain-bearing cloud rumbles and thunders across the sky as it heads towards its destination during the rainy season. With the chariot resembling this cloud, the king and the queen symbolised the Lightning and the celestial elephant called Eravat respectively.

[Note--Usually the king and the queen would ride separate chariots on ceremonial occasions, the king in an open chariot and the queen in a covered chariot. But on this occasion, they rode the same chariot to indicate that they were out on a personal mission.

The sound of the chariot is compared to the rumble and thunder of the cloud, while the majestic personality of the king, with his broad chest, tall stature, long arms, and an overbearing presence is likened to the Eravat elephant, the heavenly elephant of Indra, the king of gods, while the queen, with her glamour, radiant countenance and the shining jewellery that she wore, is likened to the lightning that dazzles through the rain-bearing clouds.]

Verse no. 37:

मा भूदाश्रमपीडेति परिमेयपुरस्सरौ।
अनुभावविशेषात्तु सेनापरिवृताविव॥ १-३७

mā bhūdāśramapīḍeti parimeyapurassarau |
anubhāvaviśeṣāttu senāparivṛtāviva || 1-37

1-37. With the thought that their arrival should not cause any kind of inconvenience to their guru (advisor and preceptor), sage Vashistha, the king took along only a small detachment of his troops, but this 'small' was so 'big' that for all practical purposes it looked like a full contingent of the army had accompanied the king and the queen on their journey to the sage's hermitage.

Verse no. 38:

सेव्यमानौ सुखस्पर्शः शालनिर्यासगन्धिभिः।
पुष्परेणूत्किरैर्वातैराधूतवनराजिभिः॥ १-३८

sevyamānau sukhasparśaiḥ śālaniryāsagandhibhiḥ |
puṣṇareṇūtkirairvātairādhūtavanarājibhiḥ || 1-38

1-38. On the way to the sage's hermitage, the royal couple enjoyed a pleasant breeze that made the trees sway, and the charming environment of the surrounding forest with its tall Sal trees, the pollen of whose flowers filled the air with a fragrant aroma.

[Note--The Sal tree is also called the Indian dammer, the Shakua tree, and its botanical name is Shorea robusta. It is a tall tree with strong and durable hardwood.]

Verse no. 39:

मनोभिरामाः शृण्वन्तौ रथनेमिस्वनोन्मुखैः।

षड्जसंवादिनीः केका दिवधा भिन्नाः शिखण्डिभिः॥ १-३९

manobhirāmāḥ śṛṇvantau rathanemisvanonmukhaiḥ |
ṣaḍjasaṁvādīnīḥ kekā dīdhā bhinnāḥ śikhaṇḍibhiḥ || 1-39

1-39. As the chariot moved rapidly forward, the rhythmic rattling sound made by its wheels attracted the attention of the peacocks who raised their heads and responded by their own screams or squawks with varying decibels, sounds that seemed like music and pleased the ears and hearts of the royal couple.

Verse no. 40:

परस्परार्क्षिसादृश्यमदूरोज्जितवर्त्मसु।

मृगद्वन्द्वेषु पश्यन्तौ स्यन्दनाबद्धदृष्टिषु॥ १-४०

parasparākṣisādrśyamadūrojjhitavartmasu |
mṛgadvandveṣu paśyantau syandanābaddhadṛṣṭiṣu || 1-40

1-40. The many pairs of deer, consisting of the male and the female, who stood on either side of the path of the chariot, did not have any fear of being harmed by the king, and trusted him so much that they gazed at the royal couple and looked at them directly in the eye.

[Note--King Dilip's reputation of being merciful and compassionate was so well-established and well-known that even animals had no fear of him. The deer did not run away at the sight of the advancing chariot and its accompanying escort of soldiers in the fear, but they stood by the roadside to look directly and making eye contact with the king and the queen, who would smile and look back, waving affectionately at the beautiful creatures.

The word 'pair' for the deer fits in well and resonates with the royal 'pair' who sat on the chariot.]

Verse no. 41:

श्रेणीबन्धादिवतन्वद्भिरस्तम्भां तोरणस्रजम्।

सारसैः कलनिर्हादैः क्वचिदुन्नमिताननौ॥ १-४१

śreṇibandhādvitanvadbhirastambhām toraṇasrajam |
sārasaiḥ kalanirhrādaiḥ kvacidunnamitānanau || 1-41

1-41. Sometimes the royal couple would raise their heads when they heard the loud trumpeting or bugling sound of a line of cranes as they moved across the sky like a string of festoons stretching overhead to mark the passage of the king's chariot on the ground below.

[Note--When the king and the queen would go out to attend some ceremony, the streets would be decorated on either sides with lines of flags, festoons and buntings tied on strings, while trumpets and bugles would be played as the chariot of the royal couple passed by. In this case, the line of cranes symbolised the festoons, and their cries, called trumpeting or bugling, symbolised the musical instruments played along the route the king's chariot would take to the venue of the ceremony.

As is evident in this verse, poet Kalidas has drawn a dramatic parallel between the line of trumpeting and bugling cranes flying over the chariot and the festoon-lined streets and the royal trumpeters and buglers who played whenever the king and the queen moved out of their palace to attend some function in the city.]

Verse no. 42:

पवनस्यानुकूलत्वात्प्रार्थनासिद्धिशंसिनः।

रजोभिस्तुरगोत्कीर्णैरस्पृष्टालकवेष्टनौ॥ १-४२

pavanasyānukūlatvātpṛārthanāsiddhiśamsinaḥ |
rajobhisturagotkīrṇairasṛṣṭālakaveṣṭanau || 1-42

1-42. The wind was blowing favourably inasmuch as it carried the dust raised by the hooves of the galloping horses of the chariot, as well as of the cavalry that rode alongside the chariot, away from the royal couple so that neither the queen's long lock of hairs nor the king's royal garbs and turban were dirtied by it (the dust).

This way of blowing of the wind in the direction where the chariot was heading (i.e. the direction leading to the hermitage of sage Vashistha) was an auspicious sign that the king's wish would be fulfilled because it gave the impression that the Wind-God himself was leading the way and escorting the chariot.

Verse no. 43:

सरसीष्वरविन्दानां वीचिविक्षोभशीतलम्।

आमोदमुपजिघ्रन्तौ स्वनिःश्वासानुकारिणम्॥ १-४३

sarasīṣvaravindānām vīcivikṣobhaśītaḥ |
āmodamupajighrantau svaniḥśvāsānukāriṇam || 1-43

1-43. While the chariot moved on, cool breeze fanned by the ripples and waves in the water of the countryside lakes, and laden with the scent of mature lotus flowers that bloomed in these lakes in great abundance, wafted in to reach the nose of the royal couple and matched with the smell of their own breath, giving them immense pleasure and joy.

[Note--The king and the queen had routinely been observing strict diet and maintaining cleanliness as part of their personal hygiene protocol. When they decided to visit sage Vashistha, they took special care to wash their mouths to ensure that no foul breath emanated from it. Probably they may have also chewed some kind of mouth-freshener and applied some oil or paste on their bodies, such as that of the sandalwood, that gave a pleasant fragrance to the surroundings around the royal couple. To this was added the fragrance of the lotus flower that wafted in with the gusts of wind.]

Verse no. 44:

ग्रामेष्व्वात्मविसृष्टेषु यूपचिह्नेषु यज्वनाम्।
अमोघाः प्रतिगृह्णन्तावर्घ्यानुपदमाशिषः॥ १-४४

grāmeṣvātmavisrṣṭeṣu yūpacihneṣu yajvanām |
amoghāḥ pratigrhṇantāvarghyānupadamāśiṣaḥ || 1-44

1-44. As the chariot of the royal couple passed through the hamlets and villages where pillars bearing the royal insignia and motifs were installed by the king earlier as a token of his sovereignty over these places, local Brahmins, who diligently pursued their religious duties such as regular performance of sacrifices and doing Vedic rituals, came forward to bless the king and the queen that the gods would fulfil their desires.

[Note--In ancient times, kings would install pillars with the royal seal, an insignia and motifs at different places within his realm, such as villages, hamlets and towns as well as along the major highways to establish his authority over these areas. These pillars stood at some central point of the village, and were usually surrounded by a park-like open space or garden that served as the meeting place for local folk. The chariot of king Dilip stopped at all such landmarks so that the local population could greet their king, and the king could pay his respects to local Brahmins who in turn would bless him and the queen.]

Verse no. 45:

हैयङ्गवीनमादाय घोषवृद्धानुपस्थितान्।
नामधेयानि पृच्छन्तौ वन्यानां मार्गशाखिनाम्॥ १-४५

haiyaṅgavīnamādāya ghoṣavṛddhānupasthitān |
nāmadheyāni pr̥cchantau vanyānām mārگاśākhinām || 1-45

1-45. As the news spread of the king's passage, elderly cowherds from the villages through which the chariot passed as well as those from the surrounding villages would come forward to gift their king freshly prepared butter from recently collected milk of cows. King Dilip met them all politely and chatted with them in a causal way, asking about the names of the trees in the area, and so on and so forth.

Verse no. 46:

काप्यभिख्या तयोरासीद्व्रजतोः शुद्धवेषयोः।
हिमनिर्मुक्तयोर्योगे चित्राचन्द्रमसोरिव॥ १-४६

kāpyabhikhyā tayorāsīdvrajatoḥ śuddhaveṣayoḥ |
himanirmuktayoryoge citrācandramasoriva || 1-46

1-46. What a fantastic sight it was to see their majesties, the glorious king and the charming queen attired in resplendent royal clothes, sitting together and going to their destination, which reminded one of the celestial sight of the resplendent Moon and the brilliant star called Chitra moving across the firmament in close association with each other.

[Note--Here, the king is compared to the moon, and the queen to the star called chitra. Chitra is called Spica (or Alpha Virginis) in astronomy. It is a bright and shiny star in close proximity with the moon, and often called the 'jewel or a pearl amongst stars'.

Queen Sudakshina was very talented and her qualities were like individuals who are compared to the Chitra star which is associated with talents in the fields of art, craft and design. And king Dilip was like the brilliant moon as it rules the night sky with its majestic presence.]

Verse no. 47:

तत्तद्भूमिपतिः पत्न्यै दर्शयन्प्रियदर्शनः।
अपि लङ्घितमध्वानं बुबुधे न बुधोपमः॥ १-४७

tattadbhūmipatiḥ patnyai darśayanpriyadarśanaḥ |
api laṅghitamadhvānaṁ bubudhe na budhopamaḥ || 1-47

1-47. King Dilip, the lord of the realm who was very intelligent and wise as well as had a pleasing personality, kept himself busy and his charming queen Sudakshina entertained by describing to her the different scenes of Nature that were visible by the roadside. This also helped them to overcome weariness of the long journey.

Verse no. 48:

स दुष्प्रापयशाः प्रापदाश्रमं श्रान्तवाहनः।
सायं संयमिनस्तस्य महर्षेर्महिषीसखः॥ १-४८

sa duṣprāpayaśāḥ prāpadāśramam śrāntavāhanam |
sāyam samyaminastasya maharṣermahiṣīsakhaḥ || 1-48

1-48. By the end of the day, as evening fell, the eminent king Dilip, whose fame was widespread, and his queen Sudakshina, along with the tired horses of their entourage, finally arrived at the hermitage of the conscientious and wise sage Vashistha.

Verse no. 49:

वनान्तरादुपावृत्तैः समित्कुशफलाहरैः।
पूर्यमाणमदृश्याग्निप्रत्युद्यात्यैस्तपस्विभिः॥ १-४९

vanāntarādupāvṛttaiḥ samitkuśaphalāharaiḥ |
pūryamaṇamadṛśyāgnipratyudyātyaistapasvibhiḥ || 1-49

1-49. The royal couple arrived at the hermitage where many fellow ascetics and disciples of sage Vashistha had just come back after gathering firewood, kush grass, fruits and flowers from different parts of the surrounding forest for the purpose of performance of the Vedic rituals and fire sacrifices by the sage, and were busy arranging the altar for this purpose where the sacred fire was to be lit.

Verse no. 50:

आकीर्णमृषिपत्नीनामुटजद्वाररोधिभिः।
अपत्यैरिव नीवारभागधेयोचितैर्मृगैः॥ १-५०

ākīrṇamṛṣipatnīnāmuṭajadvārarodhibhiḥ |
apatyairiva nīvārabhāgadheyocitairmṛgaiḥ || 1-50

1-50. That hermitage was guarded by groups of deer who blocked its entrance and waited patiently for the daughters of the sages to come out to feed them with rice and other grains that were leftovers of the offerings made during religious rituals and were meant for feeding animals and birds as part of routine charity associated with a such rituals.

These humble and amiable creatures were habituated to such feeding, and were like children of the resident hermits and ascetics who treated them affectionately and found pleasure in feeding them.

[Note--This idea of deer assembling in sage Vashistha's hermitage is continued in verse no. 52 herein below.]

Verse no. 51:

सेकान्ते मुनिकन्याभिस्तत्क्षणोज्झितवृक्षकम्।
विश्वासाय विहङ्गानामालवालाम्बुपायिनम्॥ १-५१

sekānte munikanyābhistatkṣaṇojjhitavr̥kṣakam |
viśvāsāya vihaṅgānāmālavālāmbupāyinam || 1-51

1-51. The royal couple arrived at the hermitage where young daughters of the resident ascetics would water the flowering pots and withdraw immediately after leaving the water containers on the spot so that birds, who are naturally afraid of humans and hesitate in coming close to them, could come and drink water from these containers after the daughters have gone away from the place.

[Note--In verse no. 50 we read about deer being fed, and now in the present verse we read about the birds being fed--such was the charitable and kind disposition of those who lived in the hermitage of sage Vashistha.]

Verse no. 52:

आतपात्ययसंक्षिप्तनीवारासु निषादिभिः।
मृगैर्वर्तितरोमन्थमुटजाङ्गनभूमिषु॥ १-५२

ātapātyayasam̐kṣiptanīvārāsu niṣādibhiḥ |
mṛgairvartitaromanthamuṭajāṅganabhūmiṣu || 1-52

1-52. The royal couple arrived at the hermitage where deer sat quietly around the altar and the doorway at the end of the day when the heat of the sun had abated, some leisurely ruminating cud and others slowly chewing the grains that were heaped before them.

[Note--The description of the hermitage in this as well as previous verses show that it was a very quiet and peaceful place.]

Verse no. 53:

अभ्युत्थिताग्निपिशुनैरतिथीनाश्रमोन्मुखान्।
पुनानं पवनोद्धूतैर्धूमैराहुतिगन्धिभिः॥ १-५३

abhyutthitāgnipīśunairatithīnāśramonmukhān |
punānaṁ pavanoddhūtairdhūmairāhutigandhibhiḥ || 1-53

1-53. The royal couple arrived at the hermitage of sage Vashistha from where smoke from the sacrificial fire and the aroma of the offerings made to it during religious rituals arose and wafted all around the place. A visitor could easily locate the direction of the hermitage with the help of these two indicators which sort of symbolically welcomed all the travellers who happened to be passing that way.

Verse no. 54:

**अथ यन्तारमादिश्य धुर्यान्विश्रामयेति सः।
तामवारोहयत्पत्नीं रथादवततार च॥ १-५४**

atha yantāramādīśya dhuryānviśrāmayeti saḥ |
tāmavārohayatpatnīm rathādatatāra ca || 1-54

1-54. Instructing his charioteer to give rest to the horses, king Dilip got down from the chariot and helped queen Sudakshina to alight from it.

Verse no. 55:

**तस्मै सभ्याः सभार्याय गोप्त्रे गुप्ततमेन्द्रियाः।
अर्हणामर्हते चक्रुर्मुनयो नयचक्षुषे॥ १-५५**

tasmai sabhyāḥ sabhāryāya goptre guptatamendriyāḥ |
arhaṇāmarhate cakrurmunayo nayacakṣuṣe || 1-55

1-55. Courteous and highly self-disciplined ascetics and sages who were present on the occasion in the hermitage warmly welcomed the king who was renowned as a protector and guardian of all his subjects, one who was competent and well-versed in the scriptures and practiced the principles of goodness in thought and behaviour, along with his royal consort, the queen Sudakshina.

Verse no. 56:

**विधेः सायन्तनस्यान्ते स ददर्श तपोनिधिम्।
अन्वासितमरुन्धत्या स्वाहयेव हविर्भुजम्॥ १-५६**

vidheḥ sāyantanasyānte sa dadarśa taponidhim |
anvāsitarundhatyā svāhayeva havirbhujam || 1-56

1-56. King Dilip, who was accompanied by his wife Sudakshina, saw sage Vashistha and his wife Arundhati after the completion of the evening rituals. The sage and his wife very highly venerable and had a brilliant divine aura about them so much so that they respectively resembled a personified form of the deity of the sacrificial fire representing

the venerable Fire-God along with the divine goddess Swaha who symbolised the offerings made to the sacred fire during the course of the fire sacrifice.

[Note--In this verse we have three auspicious couples--viz. king Dilip and queen Sudakshina, sage Vashistha and his wife Arundhati, and the deity representing Fire-God and goddess Swaha representing the offerings made to the sacred fire during the rituals. In effect, this troika forms an auspicious triangle where all the three sides have their own importance and glory, and together they represent a coordination of auspicious endeavours that give positive results.

The arrival of the king at the sage's hermitage at the time when the latter was performing a religious ritual is also significant as it hints of a good omen, indicating that the wish of the king would be fulfilled.

During Vedic rituals, after chanting a series of mystical mantras (formulas), pure clarified butter (i.e. ghee) and other offerings are made into the fire-pit with the belief that they are being offered to and accepted by the Fire-God. The word 'Swaha' is pronounced while doing so. As soon as these materials are put into the fire, a flame leaps up to indicate that the Fire-God has indeed stood up to accept them like a righteous man stands up to respectfully receive his equally righteous partner or consort.

Another point to note is that when king Dilip had arrived at the hermitage, the ritual of the fire sacrifice was already underway as is clearly hinted by the rising smoke and the aroma of offerings made into the fire as narrated in verse no. 53 herein above. So the king was welcomed by disciples of sage Vashistha who were standing by and not directly involved in the rituals. The king had to wait for sometime till sage Vashistha actually completed his rituals and stood up to meet the king. This present verse and the one following it herein below relate to those moments.]

Verse no. 57:

तयोर्जगृहतुः पादान्राजा राज्ञी च मागधी।
तौ गुरुर्गुरुपत्नी च प्रीत्या प्रतिननन्दतुः॥ १-५७

tayorjagr̥hatuḥ pādānrājā rājñī ca māgadhī |
tau gururgurupatnī ca prītyā pratinanandatuḥ || 1-57

1-57. King Dilip and his wife Sudakshina, the daughter of the king of Magadha, together paid their obeisance to sage Vashistha and his wife Arundhati by touching their feet reverentially, and the royal couple were in turn happily blessed by the sage and his wife.

Verse no. 58:

तमातिथ्यक्रियाशान्तरथक्षोभपरिश्रमम्।
पप्रच्छ कुशलं राज्ये राज्याश्रममुनिं मुनिः॥ १-५८

tamātithyakriyāśāntarathakṣobhapariśramam |
papraccha kuśalaṁ rājye rājyāśramamuniṁ muniḥ || 1-58

1-58. The warm hospitality of sage Vashistha helped king Dilip to overcome the weariness of his journey on a jolting chariot. When the king was sufficiently rested, the sage affectionately asked the king, who was no less than a sage with respect to fulfilling his duties towards his kingdom¹, about his welfare.

[Note--¹King Dilip was a saintly ruler who was famous for his exemplary life, his virtuousness and his qualities. He looked after his kingdom and his subjects selflessly and diligently like a sage or a saint would do his assigned duties with a selfless and charitable disposition. King Dilip was very fastidious and very cautious in his actions and thoughts. Not he alone, but the entire family of kings to which he belonged were famous for their character as has been outlined briefly in verse nos. 5-9 of this canto. King Dilip's personal attributes are narrated in verse nos. 13-30.]

Verse no. 59:

अथाथर्वनिधेस्तस्य विजितारिपुरः पुरः।
अर्थ्यामर्थपतिर्वाचमाददे वदतां वरः॥ १-५९

athātharvanidhestasya vijitāripuraḥ puraḥ |
arthyāmarthapatirvācamādade vadatāṁ varah || 1-59

1-59. After the introductory formalities were over, king Dilip, who was so powerful that he could conquer the cities of enemies and was an excellent speaker, then came to the point and told sage Vashistha, who was an expert of the Atharva Veda, about the purpose of his visit.

Verse no. 60:

उपपन्नं ननु शिवं सप्तस्वङ्गेषु यस्य मे।
दैवीनां मानुषीणां च प्रतिकर्ता त्वमापदाम्॥ १-६०

upapannaṁ nanu śivaṁ saptasvaṅgeṣu yasya me |
daivīnām mānuṣīṇām ca pratikartā tvamāpadām || 1-60

1-60. King Dilip said to sage Vashistha: "Oh Lord! Say, why will there be no all-round happiness, prosperity and welfare in all the seven divisions or arms of my kingdom¹ when you are my guardian and are there to bless me, to take care of me, and remove all my troubles related to this physical world as well as those that are related to stars and gods.

[Note--¹The 'seven' arms or wings or divisions or segments or aspects of a king's administration are the following: (i) the king himself, (ii) his ministers, (iii) his treasury, (iv) his army, (v) his subjects, (vi) his capital city, and (vii) his allies.

King Dilip was fortunate to have all of them favourable to him. He himself was good, he had good and loyal minister, his treasury was full, his army was disciplined and well-trained, his subjects were loyal and happy, his capital city and kingdom were prosperous and secure, and he had friendly allies. So there was no worry from any of these quarters.

Sage Vashistha was the principle priest and mentor of the kings of the Raghu dynasty. He was a renowned sage and possessed immense spiritual powers. So, king Dilip says that with such a great sage by his side, there is no reason why there would not be all-round happiness with him.]

Verse no. 61:

तव मन्त्रकृतो मन्त्रैर्दूरात्प्रशमितारिभिः।

प्रत्यादिश्यन्त इव मे दृष्टलक्ष्यभिदः शराः॥ १-६१

tava mantrakṛto mantrairdūrātpraśamitāribhiḥ |
pratyādiśyanta iva me dr̥ṣṭalakṣyabhidah śarāḥ || 1-61

1-61. Your holiness! Your mystical powers are so great that no matter how strong an enemy is, he stands no chance in the face of an assault on him by the invisible powers of your mantras¹ directed to neutralise him when my own arrows seem to have no visible impact on the enemy, and the latter is able to repulse my efforts to subdue him.

[Note--¹The 'mantras' referred to here are special Vedic chants that are believed to possess great spiritual powers and give effect to the wish of the person who chants them. In this case, sage Vashistha chanting these mantras to neutralise the powers of king Dilip's enemy and subdue the latter.

Kind Dilip extols sage Vashistha's mystical powers by saying that in the rarest of rare case when his own arrows fail to subdue an enemy, though these arrows are said to be invincible and infallible, the mantras of the sage would undoubtedly and invariably tame the enemy, no matter how strong and powerful he might be.]

Verse no. 62:

हविरावर्जितं होतस्त्वया विधिवदग्निषु।

वृष्टिर्भवति सस्यानामवग्रहविशोषिणाम्॥ १-६२

havirāvarjitam hotastvayā vidhivadagniṣu |
vr̥ṣṭirbhavati sasyānāmavagrahaviśoṣiṇām || 1-62

1-62. Oh honourable one who diligently performs fire sacrifices according to religious canons (vidhivadagniṣu)! When you offer oblations to the sacred fire by fastidiously following the rules for such rituals, then these offerings act like the rain that can give new life to the crop that is about to dry-up and die for lack of rain during droughts.

[Note--During extended dry periods of droughts, the standing crop faces the prospect of dying due to lack of rain. In these testing times, sage Vashistha's spiritual powers and expertise with Vedic mantras come in handy when the sage would perform a 'Yagya', a special fire sacrifice ritual, during which specific mantras that bring rain are chanted while offering oblations to the sacred fire lit for the purpose. As a result, there is rainfall and the crop is prevented from perishing.

In this verse, king Dilip lauds sage Vashistha's expertise in Vedic rituals and conduct of the fire sacrifice.]

Verse no. 63:

पुरुषायुष्यजीविन्यो निरातङ्का निरीतयः।

यन्मदीयाः प्रजास्तस्य हेतुस्त्वद्ब्रह्मवर्चसम्॥ १-६३

puruṣāyūṣyajīvinīyo nirātaṅkā nirītayāḥ |

yanmadīyāḥ prajāstasya hetustvadbrahmavarcaśam || 1-63

1-63. Further extolling the holiness and spiritual powers of sage Vashistha, king Dilip continued: "Oh Lord! It is by the means of your spiritual powers and mystical abilities which you have acquired by your religious activities, such as doing fire sacrifices and other Vedic rituals, that my subjects live a full span of life of a hundred years as designed by the Creator for a human being, and that too without having to suffer from any kind of blight during their lifetime.

Indeed, your blessings and goodwill have ensured that the subjects of the kingdom live a fruitful life of a hundred years, and during this time they are all happy and free from any kind of fear, such as from disease, enemy, financial difficulties, family relations, natural calamities, and so forth.

Verse no. 64:

त्वयैवं चिन्त्यमानस्य गुरुणा ब्रह्मयोनिना।

सानुबन्धाः कथं न स्युः संपदो मे निरापदः॥ १-६४

tvayaivam cintyamānasya guruṇā brahmayoninā |

sānubandhāḥ katham na syuḥ saṁpado me nirāpadaḥ || 1-64

1-64. You were conceived and born directly from the creator Lord Brahma as his brainchild (brahmayoninā). By having such an exalted sage as yourself as my preceptor, mentor and advisor (called a guru), say why will my fate and well-being not be safe?

How can I be subjected to troubles and my fortunes suffer when I have the protective umbrella of yours on my head?

[Note--King Dilip expresses his confidence in sage Vashistha and says that since the latter was his guru and protector, there is no reason for him to worry about anything. Just like an ordinary man who feels comfortable, safe and fearless if he has a powerful lord and master over his head, king Dilip also feels safe and secure under the umbrella of sage Vashistha's mystical and spiritual powers.]

Verse no. 65:

**किन्तु वध्वां तवैतस्यामदृष्टसदृशप्रजम्।
न मामवति सद्वीपा रत्नसूरपि मेदिनी॥ १-६५**

kintu vadhvām tavaitasyāmadṛṣṭasadṛśaprajam |
na māmavati sadvīpā ratnasūrapi medinī || 1-65

1-65. But, oh lord, I have a deep regret. When I see that your daughter-in-law (i.e. my wife, queen Sudakshina) is still childless and her womb is barren, then I feel sad and depressed. This whole earth, with its seven continents and their wealth of precious gems and metals over which I have sovereignty, looks barren to me and it gives no pleasure to me; I find no interest in them.

[Note--King Dilip finally disclosed to sage Vashistha the reason for his visit. He says that though he has no shortage of anything, and all material comforts and resources are available to him, yet having no off-spring is making him sad and feel like a person who is poor and helpless. After all, what would be the fate of his kingdom, wealth and family line if he dies without having a son to carry on his legacy. What is the use of all the wealth if there is no one who can inherit it and carry forward the name of the family? Lack of interest and enthusiasm on my part is negatively affecting my work and duties in the kingdom, and my responsibilities towards my subjects. I brood and become gloomy whenever I think of the future.]

Verse no. 66:

**नूनं मत्तः परं वंश्याः पिण्डविच्छेददर्शिनः।
न प्रकामभुजः श्राद्धे स्वधासंग्रहतत्पराः॥ १-६६**

nūnaṁ mattaḥ paraṁ vaṁśyāḥ piṇḍavicchedadarśinaḥ |
na prakāmaḥbhujaḥ śrāddhe svadhāsaṅgrahatatparāḥ || 1-66

1-66. If I die childless, then there would be no one left to perform the annual ritual whereby offerings of grain and other eatables are made to dead ancestors who are

believed to partake them to remain satisfied in whatever spiritual form they might be in their afterlife¹. I too will suffer like them.

[Note--This annual ritual is called 'Shraddha'. It is observed to offer prayers as well as oblations, libations and other forms of offerings to dead ancestors by way of food items and water which the latter accept to remain contented and peaceful in their afterlife. This ritual is done to show respect to one's ancestors, to remember them, and pray for peace in their afterlife. It is also believed that when the souls of ancestors are contented and happy, they would bless their progeny and help them to tide over difficulties in this world. Usually, donations and charities are also made in the name of ancestors by their descendants who perform the Shraddha ceremony.]

Verse no. 67:

मत्परं दुर्लभं मत्वा नूनमावर्जितं मया।

पयः पूर्वेः स्वनिःश्वासैः कवोष्णमुपभुज्यते॥ १-६७

matparam durlabham matvā nūnamāvarjitam mayā |
payah pūrvaiḥ svaniḥśvāsaiḥ kavosṇamupabhujyate || 1-67

1-67. When I offer libations by way of water and other drinks to my ancestors, I am sure that they lament and accept the drinks warmed by their deep sighs of despair, thinking that after my death there would be no one to offer it to them.

[Note--King Dilip says that when he offers drinks such as water to his ancestors during the Shraddha rituals, they lament and sigh deeply so that their warm breath warms the drink while they are sipping it. Since the king has no progeny, the ancestors worry that after his death there would be no one to offer prayers, oblations and libations to them.]

Verse no. 68:

सोऽहमिज्याविशुद्धात्मा प्रजालोपनिमीलितः।

प्रकाशश्चाप्रकाशश्च लोकालोक इवाचलः॥ १-६८

so'hamijyāviśuddhātmā prajālopanimīlitaḥ |
prakāśaścāprakāśaśca lokāloka ivācalaḥ || 1-68

1-68. Although I have been doing different religious sacrifices with devotion and faith, yet without being blessed by a child I feel that I am like a man with a defective vision who is trying to scale a mountain, for at one point of time I see light at the top of the mountain which kindles a glimmer of hope in me, and at the other moment I see complete darkness that stymies my progress.

[Note--When a man with a defective vision climbs a mountain, he is often confused as to what lies ahead. Sometimes he can clearly see the path, and at other times his eyes are blurred and he can't see the path ahead. King Dilip says that sometimes he hopes that he would be blessed with a child as a reward of the many religious rituals and sacrifices he had been doing, and at other times he feels frustrated as there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel because his wife shows no sign that she is bearing his child.]

Verse no. 69:

**लोकान्तरसुखं पुण्यं तपोदानसमुद्भवम्।
संततिः शुद्धवंश्या हि परत्रेह च शर्मणे॥ १-६९**

lokāntarasukhaṁ puṇyaṁ tapodānasamudbhavam |
saṁtatiḥ śuddhavaṁśyā hi paratreha ca śarmaṇe || 1-69

1-69. A life of self-restraint and asceticism as well as charities and donations create spiritual merit and goodwill (called 'Punya') that grants happiness in this life as well as in the afterlife of a person. But this merit and its reward are limited to the individual who leads such a life.

On the other hand, a good progeny that is virtuous and possesses excellent qualities gives happiness to that individual while he is alive and also after his death in his afterlife. Not only that, a good progeny gives happiness to many other ancestors who preceded the individual because the off-spring would perform the Shraddha ceremony that benefits not only the concerned individual who is the parent of the off-spring, but also to many generations of ancestors that preceded him.

Verse no. 70:

**तया हीनं विधातर्मा कथं पश्यन्न दूयसे।
सिक्तं स्वयमिव स्नेहाद्वन्ध्यमाश्रमवृक्षकम्॥ १-७०**

tayā hīnaṁ vidhātarmāṁ kathaṁ paśyanna dūyase |
siktaṁ svayamiva snehādvandhyamāśramavṛkṣakam || 1-70

1-70. Oh my moral preceptor, advisor, teacher and royal priest (i.e. sage Vashistha)! Why don't you feel sad and dismayed when you see me sad and distressed because of my being childless even as you would surely feel distressed when you see the plants, that you have watered so lovingly and reared carefully in your hermitage, remain barren without bearing fruits and flowers in spite of your best of care for them?

Oh sage! Does not my being childless and having no heir pain your heart; do you not feel dismayed at my predicament? Surely, if the plants in your hermitage do not bear the desired fruits and flowers though you are their caretaker, it would show you in poor light and imply that all the talk about your mystical powers were merely hollow talk. So

likewise, if I do not have an off-spring inspite of having you as my guru, would it not show you in poor light before the world?

[Note--King Dilip asks sage Vashistha that suppose the plants in the sage's hermitage do not bear fruits and flowers as expected inspite of all the efforts and care of the sage, would he not feel dismayed? So likewise, the sage must feel sad at the condition of the king too who is also under his care because the former is his guru, a moral preceptor, guide, teacher, advisor and royal priest. A guru is morally responsible for the welfare of his disciple, and a royal priest is equally responsible for the welfare of the king.

And, sage Vashistha was no ordinary teacher and priest; he was a direct mind-born son of the creator Brahma, exceptionally able and competent, and well-versed in the intricacies of Vedic rituals and ceremonies; he was an expert in performance of sacrifices to fulfill specific objectives. So it is his moral duty to do something so that the king has a child to carry forward the family line and heritage, and prevent the throne from lying vacant after the king's death. Without an off-spring, who will do Shraddha for all the ancestors and erstwhile kings?

In a sense, king Dilip politely chides sage Vashistha and warns him that it would be a matter of great shame for him if he fails to devise a device to remove this scar from the family that one of its kings died without leaving a heir inspite of having an exalted sage of Vashistha's stature as his guru!]

Verse no. 71:

असह्यपीडं भगवनृणमन्त्यमवेहि मे।

अरुन्तुदमिवालानमनिर्वाणस्य दन्तिनः॥ १-७१

asahyapīḍaṁ bhagavanṛṇamantyaṁavehi me |
aruntudamivālānamanirvāṇasya dantinaḥ || 1-71

1-71. Oh Lord (bhagavan)! Please understand the great agony of my heart (asahyapīḍaṁ) that I am unable to clear the debt I owe to my ancestors by having an off-spring, because the latter would give libation and offer oblations to their souls in their afterlife after my death. This agony is so tormenting to me, and I am unable to shake it off, just like an elephant (dantinaḥ) who feels tormented if it is firmly tied to a post from which it wants to break free, but is unable break the shackle to do so.

[Note--King Dilip regrets that if he dies childless, he will not be able to clear his debt to his ancestors because it is believed that a son in the family helps his father to clear all his debts to ancestors by continuing the process of doing Shraddha for them. If there is no off-spring, then this process would stop abruptly, and the souls of the ancestors would thirst for water and feel hungry for food in their afterlife because no one is there to do Shraddha ritual for them.]

Verse no. 72:

तस्मान्मुच्ये यथा तात संविधातुं तथार्हसि।
इक्ष्वाकूणां दुरापेऽर्थे त्वदधीना हि सिद्धयः॥ १-७२

tasmānmucye yathā tāta samvidhātum tathārhasi |
ikṣvākūṇāṃ durāpe'rthe tvadadhīnā hi siddhayaḥ || 1-72

1-72. Oh my dear guru (tāta)! You are competent enough to devise a device that would free me from that debt I owe to my ancestors; you can surely find a means by which this difficult situation that I face can be taken care of and fixed. It is because all the difficulties of the kings of the Ikshwaku race are taken care by you; all have depended on you to resolve their predicaments and overcome all their problems. {Say then, since I am your ward, where can I go other than your honourable self? Therefore, I entreat you to please do something so this scar on my face and blot on my reputation for not having an off-spring is erased.}"

Verse no. 73:

इति विज्ञापितो राजा ध्यानस्तिमितलोचनः।
क्षणमात्रमृषिस्तस्थौ सुप्तमीन इव हृदः॥ १-७३

iti vijñāpito rājñā dhyānastimitalocanaḥ |
kṣaṇamātramṛṣistasthau suptamīna iva hradaḥ || 1-73

1-73. Upon hearing king Dilip's submissions, sage Vashistha closed his eyes to meditate and became still like a lake with waters so calm that the fish in the lake could sleep undisturbed.

[Note--Here, the sage with his closed eyes is likened to the fish who are sleeping peacefully in a lake with still waters, and the lake itself is likened to the meditative trance-like state of the sage. The learned sage closed his eyes to concentrate his thoughts and contemplate in order to find out a possible solution to the problem that king Dilip presented to him.

Verse no. 74:

सोऽपश्यत्प्रणिधानेन सन्ततेः स्तम्भकारणम्।
भावितात्मा भुवो भर्तुरथैनं प्रत्यबोधयत्॥ १-७४

so'paśyatpraṇidhānena santateḥ stambhakāraṇam |
bhāvitātmā bhuvo bharturathainaṃ pratyabodhayat || 1-74

1-74. During meditation, the learned and pious sage Vashistha could discern the cause that acted as an hindrance for the king from being blessed with an off-spring.

Upon deep contemplation, the wise sage could understand the reason why the king remained childless, and once the reason was known, he opened his eyes and shared this information with the king.

Verse no. 75:

पुरा शक्रमुपस्थाय तवोर्वी प्रति यास्यतः।

आसीत्कल्पतरुच्छायामाश्रिता सुरभिः पथि॥ १-७५

purā śakramupasthāya tavorvīm prati yāsyataḥ |
āsītkalpatarucchāyāmāśritā surabhiḥ pathi || 1-75

1-75. Sage Vashistha told king Dilip: "Once it so happened that when you were returning to earth after paying a visit to the abode of Indra, the king of gods (known as Shakra; 'śakra purā') in heaven, you passed by the celestial evergreen wish-fulfilling tree called the Kalpa Tree under whose shade the heavenly cow called Surabhi ('surabhiḥ') was resting.

Verse no. 76:

धर्मलोपभयाद्राजीमृतुस्नातामनुस्मरन्।

प्रदक्षिणक्रियार्हायां तस्यां त्वं साधु नाचरः॥ १-७६

dharmalopabhayādrājīmṛtusnātāmanusmaran |
pradakṣiṇakriyārḥāyām tasyām tvam sādhu nācaraḥ || 1-76

1-76. You were so much in a hurry to come to meet your queen Sudakshina, who had taken her bath after her menstruation period, wondering what time would it be proper for you to meet her so that religious sanctions are not violated¹, that you forgot to do your duty to pay respect to the holy cow and circumambulate her (pradakṣiṇakriyārḥāyām) as she rested under the shade of the tree.

[Note--¹It is believed that a husband ought not to meet his wife during her menstruation period because she is considered impure. After this monthly period, the husband has certain days when he is obliged to meet her. King Dilip was lost in thought of this obligation while passing by the holy cow so much so that he forgot to pay his obeisance to her.]

Verse no. 77:

अवजानासि मां यस्मादतस्ते नाभविष्यति।

मत्प्रसूतिमनाराध्य प्रजेति त्वां शशाप सा॥ १-७७

avaḥjānāsi mām yasmādataste nābhaviṣyati |
matprasūtīmanārādhyā prajeti tvām śaśāpa sā || 1-77

1-77. The holy cow called Surabhi felt insulted and cursed you: "Since you have been disrespectful to me, who am like your mother, in your hurry to meet your wife with a wish to have an off-spring, you shall be prevented from having your wish fulfilled unless you repent and make amends by serving my own off-spring (i.e. my calf called Nandini) to please her as a token of your reparation."

Verse no. 78:

स शापो न त्वया राजन्न च सारथिना श्रुतः।
नदत्याकाशगङ्गायाः स्रोतस्युद्धमदिग्गजे॥ १-७८

sa śāpo na tvayā rājanna ca sārathinā śrutaḥ |
nadatyākāśagaṅgāyāḥ srotasyuddhamadiggaje || 1-78

1-78. Sage Vashistha continued: "Oh king! There was so much noise due to the trumpeting of elephants called 'Diggaḥ' in heaven as they moved around unhindered and enjoyed splashing in the celestial flow of river Ganges (called the Akash-Ganga; 'āśagaṅgāyāḥ') that in that din neither you nor your charioteer could hear what Surabhi had said (i.e. neither of you two could hear the cow's curse).

Verse no. 79:

इप्सितं तदवज्ञानादिवद्धि सार्गलमात्मनः।
प्रतिबध्नाति हि श्रेयः पूज्यपूजाव्यतिक्रमः॥ १-७९

īpsitaṁ tadavajñānādviddhi sārgalamātmanah |
pratibadhnāti hi śreyaḥ pūjyapūjāvyatikramah || 1-79

1-79. Oh king! That unintended insult of the holy cow, however, had its negative consequences for you as it blocked the path of fulfillment of your wish to have an off-spring, because if one fails to honour those who are worthy of respect then such failure automatically stops all progress in the direction of fulfillment of one's desires.

[Note--The message in this verse is that one should not neglect one's elders and those who are worthy of respect, as such negligence has negative consequences.]

Verse no. 80:

हविषे दीर्घसत्रस्य सा चेदानीं प्रचेतसः।
भुजङ्गपिहितद्वारं पातालमथितिष्ठति॥ १-८०

haviṣe dīrghasatrasya sã cedānīm pracetasah |
bhujaṅgapihitadvāraṁ pātālamadhitiṣṭhati || 1-80

1-80. At present, the holy cow is present in the nether world to attend a long-lasting Vedic ritual where offering of sweet pudding made from cow's milk is made to Varun, the God of Water (also called the Rain-God). That place is guarded by poisonous serpents who block its entrance, and it is out of bounds for humans. {The cow provides the milk for this pudding.}

Verse no. 81:

सुतां तदीयां सुरभेः कृत्वा प्रतिनिधिं शुचिः।
आराधय सपत्नीकः प्रीता कामदुघा हि सा॥ १-८१

sutām tadīyām surabheḥ kṛtvā pratinidhiṁ śuciḥ |
ārādhaya sapatnīkaḥ prītā kāmādughā hi sã || 1-81

1-81. Now I advise you to first purify yourself and your wife by taking a bath, and then both of you committing yourselves to atone for that past mistake made by you by serving Surabhi's off-spring (i.e. her calf named Nandini) in place of her, because she herself had said that the curse cast upon you would be nullified if you serve and worship her off-spring diligently (refer: verse no. 77).

If you do so fastidiously, then I am sure she will forgive you and fulfill your wish (to have a progeny)."

Verse no. 82:

इति वादिन एवास्य होतुराहुतिसाधनम्।
अनिन्द्या नन्दिनी नाम धेनुराववृते वनात्॥ १-८२

iti vādina evāsya hoturāhutiśādhanaṁ |
anindyā naṁdinī nāma dhenurāvavṛte vanāt || 1-82

1-82. As soon as the wise and enlightened sage Vashistha, who was also known as a 'Hota priest'¹, had made this advise, the auspicious, holy and taintless cow named Nandini (anindyā naṁdinī nāma), who helped the sage in performance of his fire sacrifice (by providing milk necessary for preparing items needed for making oblations to the sacred fire, such as sweet pudding or grain porridge), came to the hermitage after grazing in the surrounding forest.

[Note--¹The 'Hota priest' is a wise and learned priest who presides over a fire sacrifice and uses the hymns of the Atharva Veda to offer oblations to the sacred fire. We have already read in verse no. 59 that sage Vashistha was specially expert in the Atharva Veda.]

Verse no. 83:

ललाटोदयमाभुग्नं पल्लवस्निग्धपाटला।

बिभ्रती श्वेतरोमाङ्कं सन्ध्येव शशिनं नवम्॥ १-८३

lalāṭodayamābhugnaṁ pallavasniḡdhapāṭalā |

bibhratī śvetaromāṅkaṁ sandhyeva śaśinaṁ navam || 1-83

1-83. The Nandini cow was beautiful to behold. Her skin was as soft as a tender leaf, the colour of her body was a mixture of yellow and red (like the colour of the sun as it begins to set in the horizon in the evening), and there was a small outline resembling a crescent moon on her forehead that was formed by a line of white furry hairs, reminding one of the evening time when such a moon is visible in the sky.

[Note--The arrival of the Nandini cow in the sage's hermitage coincided with the evening hours when the sun was about to set. So the poet has drawn a parallel between the appearance of the cow with the sign of the crescent moon on her forehead, the colour of her skin which is like the reddish colour of the sky during the evening when the sun is setting, and the actual evening time of her arrival in the hermitage of sage Vashistha after spending the day grazing in the surrounding woods. Probably, the crescent moon was also visible in the evening sky.]

Verse no. 84:

भुवं कोष्णेन कुण्डोदनी मेध्येनावभृथादपि।

प्रसवेणाभिवर्षन्ती वत्सालोकप्रवर्तिना॥ १-८४

bhuvaṁ koṣṇena kuṇḍodhnī medhyenāvabhṛthādapi |

prasraveṇābhivarṣantī vatsāalokapravartinā || 1-84

1-84. When the Nandini cow returned from the forest, her udders were filled with milk and were large like a big pot (of milk); she was as auspicious and purifying as the holy bath that one takes on completion of a Vedic sacrifice; and milk dripped involuntarily from her udders when she saw her calf in the hermitage as if she was sprinkling her blessed milk on the soil to anoint the earth around the sage's hermitage with the virtues of auspiciousness, holiness and piety.

Verse no. 85:

रजःकर्णैः खुरोद्धतैः स्पृशद्भिर्गात्रमन्तिकात्।

तीर्थाभिषेकजां शुद्धिमादधाना महीक्षितः॥ १-८५

rajaḥkaṇaiḥ khuroddhūtaiḥ sprṣadbhirgātramantikāt |
tīrthābhiṣekajāṁ śuddhimādadhānā mahīkṣitaḥ || 1-85

1-85. As Nandini arrived from the woods at the hermitage, her hooves raised fine dust from the ground, and this dust fell on king Dilip's body as if Nandini was symbolically spraying a holy powder on him to bless the king and indicate to him that his wish would be fulfilled. This spraying of the dust on the king was equivalent to spraying of holy waters on him during a ceremony undertaken to perform rituals to fulfill one's wishes.

Verse no. 86:

तां पुण्यदर्शनां दृष्ट्वा निमित्तज्ञस्तपोनिधिः।
याज्यमाशंसितावन्ध्यप्रार्थनं पुनरब्रवीत्॥ १-८६

tām puṇyadarśanāṁ drṣṭvā nimittajñastaponidhiḥ |
yājyamāśamsitāvandhyaprārthanam punarabravīt || 1-86

1-86. When sage Vashistha, who was an expert in understanding the subtle meaning of the signs that indicated what was in store for the future, saw the auspicious signs surrounding Nandini as she came to the hermitage, he was intuitively able to discern a positive outcome for the king's endeavours, and he told his patron king Dilip about his hunch (that his wish of having an off-spring would be fulfilled).

Verse no. 87:

अदूरवर्तिनीं सिद्धिं राजन् विगणयात्मनः।
उपस्थितेयं कल्याणी नाम्नि कीर्तित एव यत्॥ १-८७

adūravartinīm siddhiṁ rājan vigaṇayātmanah |
upasthiteyam kalyāṇī nāmni kīrtita eva yat || 1-87

1-87. The sage told the king: "Oh King (rājan)! Be assured and have confidence now that your wishes have come nearer to the point of fulfilment, because the auspicious Nandini cow came as soon as I remembered her mother Surabhi and told you about her, as well as her stipulation that her curse would be nullified when you serve her off-spring, the Nandini cow.

Verse no. 88:

वन्यवृत्तिरिमां शश्वदात्मानुगमनेन गाम्।
विद्यामभ्यसनेनेव प्रसादयितुमर्हसि॥ १-८८

vanyavṛttirimām śaśvadātmānugamanena gām |
vidyāmaḥyaṣāṇeneva praśādayitumarhaṣi || 1-88

1-88. You must now serve her diligently and fastidiously. For this purpose, you must eat only plant-based food growing in the forest (like hermits and ascetics do), and follow the Nandini cow wherever she goes to attend to her needs as a means of serving and worshipping her so that she becomes pleased by your devotion and service. You must pursue her like a person desirous of learning pursues his studies diligently, and follows his teacher faithfully.

Verse no. 89:

प्रस्थितायां प्रतिष्ठेथाः स्थितायां स्थितिमाचरेः।
निषिण्णायां निषीदास्यां पीताम्भसि पिबेरपः॥ १-८९

prasthitāyām pratiṣṭhethāḥ sthitāyām sthitimācareḥ |
niṣiṇṇāyām niṣīdāsyām pītāmbhasi piberapaḥ || 1-89

1-89. You must walk behind her and do exactly as she does--for instance, when she walks you too should walk behind her, when she stops you should stop too, when she sits down you too should sit down with her, when she drinks water you too should drink the same water. Follow her quietly without disturbing or interfering with her in any way. Let her do whatever she wants to do, you should simply follow her actions.

Verse no. 90:

वधूर्भक्तिमती चैनामर्चितामा तपोवनात्।
प्रयता प्रातरन्वेतु सायं प्रत्युद्व्रजेदपि॥ १-९०

vadhūrbhaktimatī caināmarcitāmā tapovanāt |
prayatā prātaranvetu sāyaṁ pratyudvrajedapi || 1-90

1-90. Your my daughter-in-law and your devoted wife Sudakshina (vadhūrbhaktimatī) should also live a life of austerity, self-restraint and piety like a forest-dwelling hermitress. She should accompany Nandini cow to the edge of the hermitage when she moves out to go to the forest in the morning, and be ready to receive the cow there when the latter returns to the hermitage in the evening.

Verse no. 91:

इत्या प्रसादादस्यास्त्वं परिचर्यापरो भव।
अविघ्नमस्तु ते स्थेयाः पितेव धुरि पुत्रिणाम्॥ १-९१

ityāprasādādasyāstvaṃ paricaryāparo bhava |
avighnamastu te stheyāḥ piteva dhuri putriṇām || 1-91

1-91. In this way, you must serve Nandini till the time she is pleased with you (and your devotion). I bless you with welfare. Let it be so that you stand proudly in the forefront of all those fathers who are blessed with sons! {Let it be so that your son has excellent virtues and qualities that would make you a proud father.}

Verse no. 92:

तथेति प्रतिजग्राह प्रीतिमान्सपरिग्रहः।
आदेशं देशकालजः शिष्यः शासितुरानतः॥ १-९२

tatheti pratijagrāha prītimānsaparigrahaḥ |
ādeśaṃ deśakālajñaḥ śiṣyaḥ śāsiturānataḥ || 1-92

1-92. King Dilip who was pragmatic, polite, and a true disciple of sage Vashistha, felt very happy. He and wife reverentially accepted the instructions of the sage and assured him that they would obey his orders very faithfully, saying: "It will be done as you command".

Verse no. 93:

अथ प्रदोषे दोषजः संवेशाय विशांपतिम्।
सूनुः सूनृतवाक्स्रष्टुर्विससर्जोर्जितश्रियम्॥ १-९३

atha pradoṣe doṣajñaḥ saṃveśāya viśāṃpatim |
sūnuḥ sūnṛtavākṣraṣṭurvisasarjorjitaśriyam || 1-93

1-93. After that, sage Vashistha, who was the mind-born son of the creator Brahma, was learned, truthful and polite in his speech, asked king Dilip to retire for the night.

Verse no. 94:

सत्यामपि तपःसिद्धौ नियमापेक्षया मुनिः।
कल्पवित्कल्पयामास वन्यामेवास्य संविधाम्॥ १-९४

satyāmapi tapaḥsiddhau niyamāpekṣayā muniḥ |
kalpavitkalpayāmāsa vanyāmevāsya saṃvidhām || 1-94

1-94. The great sage Vashistha had arranged for beds for the king and the queen in line with the life of sages, ascetics and hermits who lived in the forest, inasmuch as there were no luxuries in the thatched cottage arranged for the royal couple, but it was a simple

dwelling that had a bed of grass and twigs spread on the floor to sleep upon (and an earthen pot of water for drinking purposes).

The sage wished that the couple should start observing austerities from the first night itself so that their wish can be fulfilled without a hitch, and also to ensure that they start acclimatising themselves to an austere life that is needed to worship Nandini and get her blessings, an objective that was no less demanding than the performance of a religious ritual, such as doing a fire sacrifice, to fulfill one's wish.

Verse no. 95:

**निर्दिष्टां कुलपतिना स पर्णशाला-मध्यास्य प्रयतपरिग्रहद्वितीयः।
तच्छिष्याध्यननिवेदितावसानां संविष्टः कुशशयने निशां निनाय॥ १-९५**

nirdiṣṭāṁ kulapatinā sa parṇaśālā-madhyāśya prayataparigrahadvitiyaḥ |
tacchiṣyādhyananiveditāvasānāṁ saṁviṣṭaḥ kuśaśayane niśāṁ nināya || 1-95

1-95. As instructed by sage Vashistha, king Dilip and his pious wife, queen Sudakshina, retired for the night in the thatched cottage assigned to them by the sage. The couple slept on the bed of Kush grass and twigs that were spread on the floor. It was the hour of the night when the disciples of the learned sage had just completed their studies and chants, and were readying themselves to retire for the night and sleep till the arrival of the dawn of the next day.

इति महाकवि कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये प्रथमः सर्गः॥

iti mahākavi kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvyē prathamah sargaḥ ||

Thus ends the 1st canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-75:

Introduction

As directed by sage Vashistha, king Dilip and queen Sudakshina faithfully served the holy cow Nandini and took all possible care of her. King Dilip escorted her to the meadows to graze, remained alert that no wild animal harms her, and when she returned to the hermitage in the evening, both the king and the queen made her as comfortable as possible. This routine continued smoothly for 21 days without any untoward incident. But on the 22nd day, a calamity struck. As the king was following the cow, he became so engrossed in viewing the beauty of the surrounding greenery and the scenery of the forested hills that for some moments his attention was drawn away from the cow. To test the king's integrity and sincerity of purpose, Nandini deviated from her path and quietly

entered a cave by the side of a hill where a lion had its den. The lion lunged at the cow and pushed her down to kill her.

The king suddenly realised that he has lost track of the cow when he heard the lion's roar and the distressed call of Nandini. He rushed in that direction to kill the lion, but unfortunately when he mounted an arrow on his bow to shoot down the attacker, the string of the bow got entangled in the bow's limbs and the string notch on the upper and the lower ends of the stock of the bow.

This was the test for king Dilip: he was shocked and flustered, feeling aghast at this calamitous development that not only would undermine his desire to have an offspring but also make him guilty of committing an unpardonable sin of not protecting a cow that was under his care.

When the king confronted the lion, to his amazement he heard the lion speak in a human tongue, saying that he is one of the servants of Shiva and was a guard in that part of the mountain where he has the privilege of devouring any animal that comes within his reach.

King Dilip decides that a struggle is useless, and so he implored the lion to accept him as the price for the cow's release. The lion consented, but when the king courageously presented himself to be eaten by the lion, the illusion vanished. Thus, the king passed this test and came out successful from the trial, as a result of which the holy cow Nandini was very pleased with him. She blessed the king that his long-cherished desire of having a progeny would be fulfilled.

When the king returned to the hermitage in the evening with Nandini, he was extremely happy. He told everything to sage Vashistha as well as to Sudakshina, his queen. The sage blessed him too.

The next day, the king took permission from sage Vashistha, and along with his queen he returned to the capital city where the ministers and citizens were eagerly awaiting for his return. When the news spread, everyone was very happy that at last a heir to the throne would be born soon.

The king began attending to his royal duties as usual. After sometime, to the great delight of the subjects and the satisfaction of the king, the queen became pregnant so as to carry forward the family line of king Dilip and the Ikshwaku race.

This in brief is the summary of Canto 2. Now let us read the text in detail as follows:

Verse no. 1:

अथ प्रजानामधिपः प्रभाते जायाप्रतिग्राहितगन्धमाल्याम्।

वनाय पीतप्रतिबद्धवत्सां यशोधनो धेनुमृषेर्मुमोच॥ २-१

atha prajānāmādhipaḥ prabhāte jāyāpratigrāhitagandhamālyām|

vanāya pītapratibaddhavatsāṃ yaśodhano dhenumṛṣeṛmumoca || 2-1

2-1. After the passage of the night, king Dilip, who had great fame and was renowned as one who took good care of the subjects of his kingdom, released sage Vashistha's holy cow Nandini so that she could be free to go to the meadows to graze after she had suckled

her calf that was now tied to a post in the hermitage, and queen Sudakshina had duly worshipped her by offering her a garland of scented flowers which she had strung herself.

[Note--The quality of the king that he 'was the one who took good care of his subjects' when applied to his ward, the Nandini cow at present, stresses the point that the king would not fail in his duty to serve, take care of and protect Nandini to the best of his abilities. The king 'released the cow to go the surrounding meadows' does not mean that he just loosened her tying rope and let her go alone, but that he did not hold her rope in his hands and let her go wherever she wanted to go to graze, and he quietly followed her from behind as ordered by sage Vashistha, without hindering her movement or prodding her to go in any particular direction.]

Verse no. 2:

तस्याः खुरन्यासपवित्रपांसुमपांसुलानां धुरि कीर्तनीया।
मार्गं मनुष्येश्वरधर्मपत्नी श्रुतेरिवार्थं स्मृतिरन्वगच्छत्॥ २-२

tasyāḥ khuranyāsapavitrapāṁsumapāṁsulānāṁ dhuri kīrtanīyā|
mārgaṁ manuṣyeśvaradharmapatnī śruterivārthaṁ smṛtiranvagacchat || 2-2

2-2. Queen Sudakshina, who was foremost amongst loyal wives and was faithful to her husband king Dilip, was also devoted to following the orders of sage Vashistha with regard to the cow named Nandini. So therefore, when Nandini moved out of the hermitage in the morning for her routine sojourn to the woods for grazing, Sudakshina faithfully followed her from behind along the path on which the cow walked and raised dust with her hooves, as faithfully as a wise person follows the doctrines and teachings of the Vedas by first understanding their meaning and then obeying their mandates¹.

[Note--¹The idea here is that one must first understand and grasp the meaning of the verses of the Vedas as it makes it easy for one to remember them and implement the teaching of the Vedas in daily life, with faith and diligence. This approach makes the person enthusiastic and personally committed in following the teachings of the Vedas because he knows what he is doing, as well as the fruits or rewards that would accrue to him by doing so, as compared to learning the hymns of the Vedas by rote without understanding what they actually mean to say, and then mechanically doing rituals and ceremonies just to earn some petty money.

In this analogy, Sudakshina followed Nandini because she knew about the reward she would get by serving the cow, which was that she would be blessed by a progeny; she did not worship the cow in a mechanical manner just because she was supposed to do so to please her husband or as ordered by the sage. Hence, she followed the cow with due devotion and personal commitment, and not in a mechanical way, because she knew that this service would have a profound impact on the future of her own family.]

Verse no. 3:

निवर्त्य राजा दयितां दयालुस्तां सौरभेयीं सुरभिर्यशोभिः।
पयोधरीभूतचतुःसमुद्रां जुगोप गोरूपधरामिवोर्वीम्॥ २-३

nivartya rājā dayitām dayālustām saurabheyīm surabhīryaśobhiḥ|
payodharībhūtacatuḥsamudrām jugopa gorūpadharāmivorvīm || 2-3

2-3. The celebrated king Dilip, who was famous as a merciful, compassionate and kind ruler, accompanied by his queen, followed the cow Nandini to the edge of sage Vashistha's hermitage. Then he sent his wife back, and himself followed Nandini, the offspring of the heavenly cow called Surabhi, to the forest to protect her¹.

Nandini's four udders were large and full of milk, and they represented the four chief oceans of the earth, while Nandini herself represented Mother Earth who bore these four oceans.

Hence, king Dilip, renowned as a protector of earth, followed Nandini to protect her with the conviction that she was a personified form of the deity representing Mother Earth, and that by protecting and serving the cow, he was doing his moral duty as a king to serve and protect the earth.

[Note--¹This was in accordance with sage Vashistha's advise as narrated in Canto 1, verse nos. 88-90 wherein the sage had instructed the king that the queen should accompany him and the cow till the edge of the hermitage when she goes out to the forest in the morning, and then return from there, while the king should follow Nandini through the day. In the evening, when the cow returns to the hermitage, the queen should go and receiver her back from the same spot from where she had let her move out in the morning.]

Verse no. 4:

व्रताय तेनानुचरेण धेनोर्न्यषेधि शेषोऽप्यनुयायिवर्गः।
न चान्यतस्तस्य शरीररक्षा स्ववीर्यगुप्ता हि मनोः प्रसूतिः॥ २-४

vratāya tenānucareṇa dhenorhyaṣedhi śeṣo'pyanuyāyivargah|
na cānyatastasya śārīrarakṣā svavīryaguptā hi manoḥ prasūtiḥ || 2-4

2-4. In order to faithfully follow the instructions of the sage and fulfill his obligations to lead a life of a forest-dwelling hermit¹ who tends to himself and does not depend on other to support or protect him, the king ordered all his attendants² to return inside the hermitage's boundaries as he followed Nandini alone to serve and protect her.

In fact, king Dilip actually needed no one to protect him as he was fully competent and able to protect himself, being a valiant, courageous, fearless and brave son born in a family of a great ancient king named Manu (from whom his ancestors had descended) whose descendants were valorous, strong and powerful enough to protect themselves.

[Note--¹This was also one of the conditions of sage Vashistha, that the king should live like a forest-dwelling sage, hermit or ascetic--refer: Canto 1, verse nos. 88 and 94.

²We must remember that when the king arrived at the sage's hermitage he was not alone; he came in a chariot, and was accompanied by his soldiers and horses--refer: Canto 1, verse nos. 36-37, 54. During his stay in the hermitage, his charioteer and soldiers were likely ordered to lead a quiet life so as not to disturb anyone in the hermitage. This is also evident in Canto 1, verse no. 37 which says that the king took along a minimum number of soldiers so as not to disturb anyone in the hermitage.]

Verse no. 5:

आस्वादवद्भिः कवलैस्तृणानां कण्डूयनैर्दशनिवारणैःश्च।
अव्याहतैः स्वैरगतैश्च तस्याः सम्राट् समाराधनतत्परोऽभूत्॥ २-५

āsvādavadbhiḥ kavalaistrṇānām kaṇḍūyanairdaṁśanivāraṇaiḥśca|
avyāhataiḥ svairagataiśca tasyāḥ samrāṭ samārāadhanatatparo'bhūt || 2-5

2-5. The Emperor Dilip, who ruled all the corners of the earth, and was thus honoured with the title of a 'Samraat' (samrāṭ), served the cow named Nandini to the best of his abilities. He would pluck soft grass and make a brush with it to brush her body if it itched, and also to ward-off mosquitoes, flies and insects from tormenting her as she grazed in the meadows. Nandini would wander unrestricted in the forest at her own free will, and the king would ensure that no hindrance came in her way.

Verse no. 6:

स्थितः स्थितामुच्चलितः प्रयातां निषेदुषीमासनबन्धधीरः।
जलाभिलाषी जलमाददानां छायेव तां भूपतिरन्वगच्छत्॥ २-६

sthitah sthitāmuccalitaḥ prayātām niṣeduṣīmāsanabandhadhīrah|
jalābhilāṣī jalamādadānām chāyeva tāṁ bhūpatiranvagacchat || 2-6

2-6. King Dilip followed Nandini like a shadow and let her wonder in the forest unrestricted. He would stop when she stopped; he would move on when she moved on; he would sit down when she sat down; he would drink water when she herself drank water, and so on and so forth¹.

[Note--¹This was exactly what sage Vashistha had instructed king Dilip to do--refer: Canto 1, verse no. 89.]

Verse no. 7:

स न्यस्तचिहनामपि राजलक्ष्मीं तेजोविशेषानुमितां दधान।
आसीदनाविष्कृतदानराजिरन्तर्मदावस्थ इव दिवपेन्द्रः॥ २-७

sa nyastacihnāmapi rājalakṣmīm tejoviśeṣānumitām dadhāna|
āsīdanāviṣkṛtadānarājirantarmadāvastha iva dvipendraḥ || 2-7

2-7. Though at present king Dilip had no paraphernalia of royalty with him, such as the ceremonial umbrella and a crown over his head, or a whisk that is waved in front of a king when he sits on his throne, and other accoutrements or regalia of nobility and royalty, yet he had such a dignified appearance and a majestic personality borne out of his royal upbringing that it was easy to discern that he was no ordinary man but someone special, someone royal and honourable.

By his royal aura, dignity and demeanours he resembled an adult and well-built elephant who is especially chosen to serve in a temple during ceremonies¹.

[Note--¹These elephants are well looked after, well fed, and made to live a comfortable life. So they develop an imposing physique that makes them stand out in a herd of elephants. Likewise, though king Dilip was at present attired simply as a forest-dwelling hermit, yet there was no mistaking of him as being someone having a royal heritage.]

Verse no. 8:

लताप्रतानोद्ग्रथितैः स केशैरधिज्यधन्वा विचचार दावम्।
रक्षापदेशान्मुनिहोमधेनोर्वन्यान्विनेष्यन्निव दुष्टसत्त्वान्॥ २-८

latāpratānodgrathitaiḥ sa keśairadhijyadhanvā vicacāra dāvam|
rakṣāpadeśānmunihomadhenorvanyānvineṣyanniva duṣṭasattvān || 2-8

2-8. King Dilip, who had tied his long hairs in a bun at the top of his head with the help of thin creepers and their sap (used to tighten the loose hair and form a plait that is twirled and folded into a bun), held a stringed bow ready in his hand as he followed the cow of sage Vashistha (i.e. Nandini) to the forest to protect her from any predator. In a way, it was an excuse to warn all wild animals and savages living in the vicinity of the hermitage to be careful and disciplined inasmuch they ought to avoid attacking an innocent creature who means no harm to them at all, for if they act recklessly then they would meet their death instantly.

[Note--The long-term benefit of king Dilip's vigil was that no dangerous animal or savage living in the remote areas of the forest ever dared to come near and disturb the peace of sage Vashistha's hermitage.]

Verse no. 9:

विसृष्टपार्श्वानुचरस्य तस्य पार्श्वद्रुमाः पाशभृता समस्य।
उदीरयामासुरिवोन्मदानामालोकशब्दं वयसां विरावैः॥ २-९

visṛṣṭapārśvānucarasya tasya pārśvadrūmāḥ pāśabhṛtā samasya |
udīrayāmāsūrivonmadānāmālokaśabdāṁ vayasāṁ virāvaiḥ || 2-9

2-9. After the king instructed his attendants to turn back as he went forth alone with Nandini into the forest, the trees in the woods welcomed the king and bowed to him by gently swaying their tops as they would welcome and bow before Varun, the god of rain, while the flock of birds perching on the branches of these trees chirped and trilled as if they were singing laurels in honour of the king like a royal choir that would sing praises of the king when he ventured out on a ceremonial tour of his kingdom.

Verse no. 10:

मरुत्प्रयुक्ताश्च मरुत्सखाभं तमर्च्यमारादभिवर्तमानम्।
अवाकिरन्बाललताः प्रसूनैराचारलाजैरिव पौरकन्याः॥ २-१०

marutprayuktāśca marutsakhābhaṁ tamarcyamārādabhivartamānam |
avākiranbālalatāḥ prasūnairācārālājairiva paurakanyāḥ || 2-10

2-10. The nearby creepers, that were laden with flowers and swayed in the soft breeze, showered flowers on the king, who was radiant like a fire, as he passed by. It was symbolically like the case of young maidens showering flowers on the king during the performance of a fire sacrifice.

[Note--King Dilip was on a noble mission of protecting the holy cow Nandini, while at the same time obeying the orders of a learned sage of Vashistha's exalted stature. These two things were no less commendable than the performance of a fire sacrifice during which girls shower flowers on the patron who presides over the rituals. The gust of winds made the flowers fall automatically on the king, and this showering of the flowers along with bowing of the trees and the birds singing in honour of the king as narrated in the previous verse no. 9 shows that Mother Nature was very pleased with the king.]

Verse no. 11:

धनुर्भृतोऽप्यस्य दयार्द्रभावमाख्यातमन्तःकरणैर्विशङ्कैः।
विलोकयन्त्यो वपुरापुरक्षणां प्रकामविस्तारफलं हरिण्यः॥ २-११

dhanurbhṛto'pyasya dayārdrabhāvamākhyātamantaḥkaraṇairviśaṅkaiḥ |
vilokayantyo vapurāpurakṣṇāṁ prakāmavistāraphalaṁ hariṇyaḥ || 2-11

2-11. Though king Dilip was armed with a stringed bow and had an arrow mounted on it to instantly tackle any danger to the cow Nandini, but his external appearance was misleading as it failed to depict his true nature as being a very compassionate, merciful and kind human being. So therefore, the deer who stood wide-eyed and watched the king pursue the cow did not fear him at all as they intuitively knew that he was not a hunter but a protector of all creatures. Instead of being alarmed by his presence, they felt themselves lucky to see the king and admired his noble characters.

Verse no. 12:

स कीचकैर्मारुतपूर्णरन्ध्रैः कूजद्विरापादितवंशकृत्यम्।
शुश्राव कुञ्जेषु यशः स्वमुच्चैरुद्गीयमानं वनदेवताभिः॥ २-१२

sa kīcakairmārutapūrṇarandhraiḥ kūjadbhiraṇpāditavaṁśakṛtyam|
śuśrāva kuñjeṣu yaśaḥ svamuccairudgīyamānaṁ vanadevatābhiḥ || 2-12

2-12. The king heard the sound of breeze passing through the holes of bamboo stalks that abounded in the surrounding thickets, and this sound of varying tones appeared to resemble the sound of the flute played by an orchestra of flutists, as if the deities of the forest representing Nature were welcoming the king and singing his glories by playing a symphony orchestra of sorts in his honour.

Verse no. 13:

पृक्तस्तुषारैर्गिरिनिर्झराणमनोकहाकम्पितपुष्पगन्धी।
तमातपक्लान्तमनातपत्रमाचारपूतं पवनो निषेवे॥ २-१३

pr̥ktastuṣārairgirinirjharāṇamanokahākampitapuṣpagandhī|
tamātapaklāntamanātapatramācārapūtaṁ pavano niṣeve || 2-13

2-13. King Dilip, who had a body that was accustomed to hardships, but, being a human being after all, he felt a little bit tired due to the unrelenting heat of the sun. Mother Nature stepped in, however, to provide him relief by blowing a cool and fragrant breeze over him.

This breeze was cooled by its contact with the spray of water from the many waterfalls cascading down the surrounding hills, and made fragrant with the scent of flowers as it collected their pollen while blowing over them.

[Note--Mother Nature seemed to give all possible comfort to king Dilip so that he can complete his rigid test. Since he was tired due to the heat of the midday sun, Nature ensured that a cool and fragrant breeze blew over him to make him feel relaxed and comfortable. The breeze was not hot and dry, but cooled by the spray of water as it passed over the waterfalls. Similarly, it was made fragrant by collecting the scent of the flowers when it passed over the trees of the forest.]

Verse no. 14:

शशाम वृष्ट्यापि विना दवाग्निरासीद्विशेषा फलपुष्पवृद्धिः।
ऊनं न सत्त्वेष्वधिको बबाधे तस्मिन्वनं गोप्तरि गाहमाने॥ २-१४

śaśāma vṛṣṭyāpi vinā davāgnirāsīdvīśeṣā phalapuṣṣpavṛddhiḥ|
ūnaṁ na sattveṣvadhiko babādhe tasminvanam goptari gāhamāne || 2-14

2-14. When the king, who was renowned as a protector of all, entered the forest, its fearful, hostile and tormenting environment underwent a drastic change. The suffocating heat in the dense forest cooled down even without rainfall; flowers and fruits bloomed and grew in abundance; and powerful and strong animals (like the lion, tiger etc.) could not terrorise and harm those animals who were weak, docile and humble (like the deer).

[Note--An environment of peace, tranquility and brotherhood prevailed in the otherwise hostile atmosphere of the wild woods.

Verse nos. 9-14 narrate the welcome accorded by Nature to the king when he entered the forest to accompany Nandini.]

Verse no. 15:

संचारपूतानि दिगन्तराणि कृत्वा दिनान्ते निलयाय गन्तुम्।
प्रचक्रमे पल्लवरागतामा प्रभा पतंगस्य मुनेश्च धेनुः॥ २-१५

saṁcārapūtāni digantarāṇi kṛtvā dinānte nilayāya gantum|
pracakrame pallavarāgatāmā prabhā patangasya muneśca dhenuḥ || 2-15

2-15. In the evening when Nandini turned to return home to the sage's hermitage after a day of wandering in the forest in whatever direction she wished to graze and bless the surroundings with her august presence, her complexion appeared to have the same colour as the setting sun which had a reddish hue like that of a newly sprouted tender leaf which has dark green colour appearing to be deep red because of the sunlight that falls on them at an angle.

{This verse could be read as follows also: In the evening when the rays of the sun had assumed a reddish hue and made newly sprouted leaves, with their dark green colour, appear to bear a similar colour as the rays of the setting sun, the cow named Nandini turned to return to the hermitage after a day-long sojourn during which she blessed, by her august presence, the many directions in which she had wandered to graze.}

Verse no. 16:

तां देवतापित्रतिथिक्रियार्थमन्वग्ययौ मध्यमलोकपालः।
बभौ च सा तेन सतां मतेन श्रद्धेव साक्षाद्विधिनोपपन्ना॥ २-१६

tām devatāpitratithikriyārthāmanvagayau madhyamalokapālah|
babhau ca sā tena satām matena śraddheva sākṣādividhinopapannā || 2-16

2-16. Emperor Dilip followed Nandini-- the all wish-fulfilling holy cow who could fulfill the wishes and objectives of gods, ancestors and guests alike-- from behind.

Nandini was accompanied by king Dilip, who was respected and honoured by all, and together they represented a religious exercise that bears fruits when done with faith and devotion.

[Note--Here, Nandini is the religious exercise, and king Dilip represents the faith and devotion with which it is to be done in order to bear desired fruits or rewards. The results are not visible instantly, but take some time to show results in order to test the sincerity and consistency of a person who is doing the religious exercise. Likewise, king Dilip had to serve Nandini consistently and faithfully, with due devotion and diligence, for 21 days before his desired result was obtained on the 22nd day--refer: verse nos. 25-26; 61-67 herein below.]

Verse no. 17:

स वल्वलोत्तीर्णवराहयूथान्यावासवृक्षोन्मुखबर्हिणानि।
ययौ मृगाध्यासितशाद्वलानि श्यामायमानानि वनानि पश्यन्॥ २-१७

sa valvalottīrṇavarāhayūthānyāvāsavṛkṣonmukhabarhiṇāni|
yayau mṛgādhyāsitaśādvalāni śyāmāyamānāni vanāni paśyan || 2-17

2-17. While wending his way back along with Nandini to the hermitage of the sage, king Dilip looked around and saw the natural sights of the forest as seen during the evening hours.

{What did he see?} He could see large number of wild boars coming out of ponds and heading towards their shelters; he could see large number of black-bees humming and making a beeline towards the trees on which they had their hives; he could see deer sitting in a relaxed mood on green grass surrounded by an all-pervading greenery of the forest.

Verse no. 18:

आपीनभारोद्वहनप्रयत्नाद्गृष्टिर्गुरुत्वाद्वपुषो नरेन्द्रः।
उभावलंचक्रतुरञ्जिताभ्यां तपोवनावृत्तिपथं गताभ्याम्॥ २-१८

āpīnabhārodvahanaprayatnādgṛṣṭirgurutvādvapuṣo narendrah|
ubhāvalaṁcakraturañjitābhyāṁ tapovanāvṛttipatham gatābhyām || 2-18

2-18. Nandini cow produced only one calf, and her milk-filled udders were so large and heavy (refer verse no. 3 herein above) that she found it difficult to support herself as she walked gracefully back to the hermitage.

Similarly, king Dilip had a majestic presence, with a well-built muscular body which he carried along with grace and charm.

Hence, when the duo walked together on the path leading to the hermitage of sage Vashistha at the end of the day, they presented a very admirable pair with their graceful strides that lent charm to the evening-tide.

Verse no. 19:

**वसिष्ठधेनोरनुयायिनं तमावर्तमानं वनिता वनान्तात्।
पपौ निमेषालसपक्ष्मपङ्क्तिरूपोषिताभ्यामिव लोचनाभ्याम्॥ २-१९**

vasiṣṭhadhenoranuyāyinaṁ tamāvartamānaṁ vanitā vanāntāt|
papau nimeṣālasapakṣmapaṅktirupoṣitābhyāmiva locanābhyām || 2-19

2-19. As the holy cow Nandini and king Dilip who was following her approached the hermitage of sage Vashistha, the queen Sudakshina was waiting to receive them at the threshold (or the entry gate) of the hermitage, with her eyes fixed on them as she stared unblinkingly in the direction from which they were coming.

Verse no. 20:

**पुरस्कृता वर्त्मनि पार्थिवेन प्रत्युद्गता पार्थिवधर्मपत्न्या।
तदन्तरे सा विरराज धेनुर्दिनक्षपामध्यगतेव सन्ध्या॥ २-२०**

puraskṛtā vartmani pāṛthivena pratyudgatā pāṛthivadharmapatnyā|
tadantare sā virarāja dhenurdinakṣapāmadhyagateva sandhyā || 2-20

2-20. Nandini, the holy cow--who was placed between king Dilip following her from behind, and queen Sudakshina who led her from the front as she (Nandini) entered the hermitage--looked admirable like the evening which is placed between the day and the night.

[Note--In this analogy, Nandini represents the evening, king Dilip represents the day as he followed the cow from the rear, and queen Sudakshina represents the night as she led the cow to her resting place during the night. The evening is placed betwixt the day that is behind it, and the night that is in front of it.]

Verse no. 21:

प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य पयस्विनीं तां सुदक्षिणा साक्षतपात्रहस्ता।

प्रणम्य चानर्च विशालमस्याः शृङ्गान्तरं द्वारमिवार्थसिद्धेः॥ २-२१

pradakṣiṇīkṛtya payasvinīm tām sudakṣiṇā sākṣatapātrahastā |
praṇamya cānarca viśālamasyāḥ śṛṅgāntaraṁ dvāramivārthasiddheḥ || 2-21

2-21. Queen Sudakshina held a pot full of consecrated rice as she circled around the milch cow named Nandini in a clock-wise manner as a mark of showing respect to her, and then stood in the front of the cow to worship her by anointing her broad forehead in the center of her large horns with the consecrated rice as a ritual so that her wishes (of having a son) could be fulfilled.

Verse no. 22:

वत्सोत्सुकापि स्तिमिता सपर्या प्रत्यग्रहीत्सेति ननदुतुस्तौ।

भक्त्योपपन्नेषु हि तद्विधानानां प्रसादचिह्नानि पुरःफलानि॥ २-२२

vatsotsukāpi stimitā saparyām pratyagrahītseti nanadutustau |
bhaktyopapanneṣu hi tadvidhānānām prasādacihnāni puraḥphalāni || 2-22

2-22. Although Nandini was in a haste to go to her calf, yet she stood patiently to let the king and the queen complete their worship ritual before proceeding further inside the hermitage. This was an auspicious sign for the royal couple as Nandini had waited quietly to accept their worship as a sign that their wishes would be honoured. The fact that Nandini gladly accepted their worship showed that she was pleased with the devotion and the service of king and the queen, and hence would be willing to grant them their wish.

{Otherwise, she would have brushed them off or neglected them, and instead rush inside the hermitage to meet her calf who must surely have been mooing loudly for her mother by this time.}

Verse no. 23:

गुरोः सदारस्य निपीड्य पादौ समाप्य सांध्यं च विधिं दिलीपः।

दोहावसाने पुनरेव दोग्ध्रीं भजे भुजोच्छिन्नरिपुर्निषण्णाम्॥ २-२३

guroḥ sadārasya nipīḍya pādau samāpya sām̐dhyam ca vidhiṁ dilīpaḥ |
dohāvasāne punareva dogdhrīm bheje bhujocchinnaripurniṣaṇṇām || 2-23

2-23. King Dilip, who was a vanquisher of enemies by the might of his arms, paid his obeisance to sage Vashistha and his saintly wife Arundhati by bowing before them. Then the king completed his evening rituals and went to serve Nandini once again as the latter waited to be milked (by him).

[Note--Earlier, someone else in the hermitage would milk Nandini every evening. But from the very first evening of king Dilip being in the service of the cow, he took up the responsibility to do this service himself.]

Verse no. 24:

तामन्तिकन्यस्तबलिप्रदीपामन्वास्य गोप्ता गृहिणीसहायः।

क्रमेण सुप्तामनु संविवेश सुप्तोत्थितां प्रातरनूदतिष्ठत्॥ २-२४

tāmantikanyastabalipradīpāmanvāsya goptā grhiṇīśahāyaḥ|

krameṇa sūptāmanu saṁviveśa sūptotthitāṁ prātaranūdatiṣṭhat || 2-24

2-24. King Dilip, the protector and care-taker of Nandini, sat down near the cow with his wife, queen Sudakshina to keep vigil. Enough fodder and a lighted oil lamp were placed near the cow in the cow-shed. After the cow ate the fodder and went to sleep, the king and the queen too went to sleep. In the morning, the royal couple woke up after the cow woke up from her sleep.

{This verse can be interpreted and read in a different way as follows: 'King Dilip, the protector and care-taker of Nandini, sat down near the cow with his wife, queen Sudakshina to keep vigil. Enough fodder and a lighted oil lamp were placed near the cow in the cow-shed. After the cow ate the fodder and went to sleep, the king and the queen too went to sleep near her. They woke up when the cow woke up in the morning.'}

[Note--This was the daily routine of king Dilip and queen Sudakshina. After the cow returned to the hermitage in the evening, the couple would worship her and escorted her to the cow-shed. After completing his daily evening rituals, the king would milk the cow, feed her fodder from the stock placed before her, sat down quietly by her side and waited till the cow went to sleep. After that, both the king and the queen would sleep near the cow and keep vigil on her. The royal couple would wake up after the cow woke up the next morning, attend to her needs and also complete their personal morning ablutions, and then they would escort the cow to the gate of the hermitage where the queen would offer her obeisance to the cow, after which the king would escort the latter to the woods for daily grazing. As evening fell, the cow returned to the hermitage with the king respectfully following her from behind.

It is not specifically stated here where the royal couple actually slept in the night: whether they slept near the cow in the cow-shed itself, or in the cottage that sage Vashishta had assigned to them (refer: canto 1, verse nos. 93-95).

A reading of this verse indicates two possible things--one is that the king and the queen slept in the cow-shed itself where an oil lamp was lit, and two, after the cow went to sleep in the cow-shed where an oil lamp was kept lighted for the night, the royal couple retired to the cottage that sage Vashishta had assigned to them.]

Verse no. 25:

इत्थं व्रतं धारयतः प्रजार्थं समं महिष्या महनीयकीर्तः।

सप्त व्यतीयुस्त्रिगुणानि तस्य दिनानि दीनोद्धरणोचितस्य॥ २-२५

itthaṁ vrataṁ dhārayataḥ prajārthaṁ samaṁ mahiṣyā mahaniyakīrteḥ |
sapta vyatīyustriguṇāni tasya dināni dīnoddharaṇocitasya || 2-25

2-25. In this way, the famous king Dilip, who was a protector of the humble and the meek, along with his wife, queen Sudakshina, spent three weeks (i.e. 21 days) faithfully keeping their vow of leading a strict life of austerity and discipline with the objective of having an off-spring by serving the holy cow Nandini in order to please her and get her blessing in the form of a boon which would fulfill their desire.

Verse no. 26:

अन्येद्युरात्मानुचरस्य भावं जिज्ञासमाना मुनिहोमधेनुः।

गङ्गाप्रपातान्तविरुद्धशष्पं गौरीगुरोर्गहवरमाविवेश॥ २-२६

anyedyurātmānucarasya bhāvaṁ jijñāsamānā munihomadhenuḥ |
gaṅgāprapātāntavirūḍḥaśaṣpaṁ gaurīgurorgahvaramāviveśa || 2-26

2-26. On the 22nd day, Nandini, who was instrumental in helping sage Vashistha complete his religious rituals (by providing milk, cow-dung, and auspiciousness by her presence), wanted to test the sincerity of her follower, king Dilip.

With this intention, she willingly entered a cave whose entrance was hidden from view as it was covered by wild creepers, and it was located in a hill by the side of a waterfall that originated from a stream which had its origin in the river Ganges in the Himalayas.

Verse no. 27:

सा दुष्प्रधर्षा मनसापि हिंसैरित्यद्रिशोभाप्रहितेक्षणेन।

अलक्षिताभ्युत्पतनो नृपेण प्रसह्य सिंहः किल तां चकर्ष॥ २-२७

sā duṣṭpradharṣā manasāpi himsairityadriśobhāprahitekṣaṇena |
alakṣitābhyutpatano nṛpeṇa prasahya siṃhaḥ kila tāṁ cakarṣa || 2-27

2-27. King Dilip was confident that no wild animal would ever think of attacking Nandini (because she was harmless to everyone, and was also protected by an aura of holiness), so for sometime his mind was distracted and he became engrossed in viewing the beauty of the surrounding hills so much so that he failed to notice Nandini entering the cave where a lion attacked her.

[Note--As we have read in the previous verse, Nandini wanted to test king Dilip's diligence and commitment to serve her sincerely as instructed by sage Vashistha. Since Nandini was empowered by some divine powers as compared to ordinary cows, she cast a net of delusions that made king Dilip get distracted for some moments, and fail in his duty of keeping a constant vigil on the cow, take good care of her by following her from behind, and never leave her alone as directed by the sage.]

This was the 22nd day of his outing with the cow; for the last 21 days the scenery of the hills, the meadows and the forest, with its variety of animals and trees had not distracted the king, and common sense tells us that he must have seen the sights many times in the last 21 days during his wanderings. But the fiat of fate is very strong, and no one is spared from its influence, that on the 22nd day the king slipped into the trap.]

Verse no. 28:

तदीयमाक्रन्दितमार्तसाधोर्गुहानिबद्धप्रतिशब्ददीर्घम्।

रश्मिष्विवादाय नगेन्द्रसक्तां निवर्तयामास नृपस्य दृष्टिम्॥ २-२८

tadīyamākranditamārtasādhorguhānibaddhapratishabdādirgham|

raśmiṣvivādāya nagendrasaktāṁ nivartayāmāsa nr̥pasya dr̥ṣṭim || 2-28

2-28. The loud bellowing distressed call of the cow Nandini (when the lion attacked her) reverberated in the cave and emerged from its mouth to reach the ears of king Dilip, the protector of the meek and distressed (ārtasādhō), breaking his reverie of enchantment by the sights of the beauty of the mountain, and pulled him into the world of reality and drew his attention to the source of the wailing sound of the cow, just like a horse, that has strayed from its path, is pulled by the horseman by its rein and drawn to the place where it is supposed to go.

[Note--If a horse gets distracted and goes off the path, the horseman would pull it back on the chosen path by pulling its rein. Similarly, the wails of the cow suddenly pulled king Dilip away from his enchanted world of mountain beauty and back into the world of reality. The stunned king suddenly realised that he has lost track of the cow who he was supposed to protect and keep close watch on, and that some calamity has struck her because of which she is bellowing so distressfully.]

Verse no. 29:

स पाटलायां गवि तस्थिवांसं धनुर्धरः केसरिणं ददर्श।

अधित्यकायामिव धातुमय्यां लोधद्रुमं सानुमतः प्रफुल्लम्॥ २-२९

sa pāṭalāyāṁ gavi tasthivāṁsaṁ dhanurdharaḥ kesariṇaṁ dadarśa|

adhityakāyāmiva dhātumayyāṁ lodhradrumaṁ sānumataḥ praphullam || 2-29

2-29. As king Dilip, who was armed with a stringed bow, dashed to the cave and entered it, he saw a lion sitting on the back of the copper-coloured cow (Nandini), as if a huge Lodhra tree¹ in full bloom was straddling on the top of a hill that had a large quantity of copper ore, the colour of which was like the colour of the cow.

[Note--¹The Lodhra tree--It is called 'Symlocos racemosa' tree in botany. It is an evergreen tree native to Indian sub-continent. It has a rough, greyish-brown bark.

In this analogy, the cow is likened to the copper-coloured hill, and the lion that sat on the cow to the Lodhra tree that grows on the top and sides of the hill. The tree grows on the side and top of the hill as if it was riding on it, just like the lion who sat on the cow.]

Verse no. 30:

ततो मृगेन्द्रस्य मृगेन्द्रगामी वधाय वध्यस्य शरं शरण्यः।
जाताभिषङ्गो नृपतिर्निषङ्गादुद्धर्तुमैच्छत्प्रसभोद्धृतारिः॥ २-३०

tato mrgendrasya mrgendragāmī vadhāya vadyasya śaraṁ śaraṇyaḥ|
jātābhiṣaṅgo nrpatirniṣaṅgāduddhartumaicchatprasabhoddhṛtāriḥ || 2-30

2-30. Observing the urgency and danger of the situation (where every second mattered), king Dilip--who walked fearlessly like a lion (as he rushed towards the lion and its victim Nandini), who was also a protector of those who sought his protection (in this case the cow Nandini), and who could uproot and trounce his enemies in an instant (in this case the attacking lion)--instinctively desired to pull out an arrow from his quiver (in order to shoot the attacking lion and save Nandini).

Verse no. 31:

वामेतरस्तस्य करः प्रहर्तुर्नखप्रभाभूषितकङ्कपत्रे।
सक्ताङ्गुलिः सायकपुङ्ख एव चित्रार्पितारम्भ इवावतस्थे॥ २-३१

vāmetarastasya karaḥ praharturnakhaprabhābhūṣitakaṅkapatre|
saktāṅguliḥ sāyakapuṅkha eva citrārpitārambha ivāvatasthe || 2-31

2-31. The right hand of the king who wished to pull out the arrow, mount it on his bow and shoot the lion, suddenly got stuck on the rear end of the arrow that was made of feathers of the heron bird. He felt dazed and astonished because he was unable to move his hand. With his right hand stuck on the feathered end of the arrow, the king resembled a portrait of his wherein he was holding the arrow, as if he was about to mount it on his bow to shoot, and the polished nails of his fingers shined atop the feathers that formed the rear end of the arrow.

[Note--The king was suddenly and mysteriously paralysed; he was not able to remove his right hand from the arrow as he mounted it on the bow to shoot at the lion.]

Verse no. 32:

बाहुप्रतिष्ठम्भविवृद्धमन्युरभ्यर्णमागस्कृतमस्पृशद्भिः।

राजा स्वतेजोभिरदह्यतान्तर्भोगीव मन्त्रौषधिरुद्धवीर्यः॥ २-३२

bāhupratiṣṭambhaviṣṭamanyurabhyarṇamāgaskṛtamasprśadbhiḥ|
rājā svatejobhiradahyatāntarbhogīva mantrauṣadhiruddhavīryaḥ || 2-32

2-32. The king's fury increased as he felt helpless to strike at the culprit (the lion) who was right in his front and within his reach, but whom the king was unable to even touch, just like an angry serpent who is ready to strike but feels unable to do so because of some mantras (incantations and spells) and herbs that have been used to restraint its movement.

This frustration of being unable to punish the lion made the king vehemently angry, and this anger burnt inside him and virtually roasted him alive.

[Note--Here, king Dilip is likened to the angry serpent who is unable to strike at its offender. The king's inability to strike at the lion made him angry and frustrated.]

Verse no. 33:

तमार्यगृह्यं निगृहीतधेनुर्मनुष्यवाचा मनुवंशकेतुम्।

विस्माययन्विस्मितमात्मवृत्तौ सिंहोरुसत्त्वं निजगाद सिंहः॥ २-३३

tamāryagrhyam nigṛhītadhenurmanuṣyavācā manuvaṁśaketum|
vismāyayanvismitamātmavṛttau siṁhorusattvaṁ nijagāda siṁhaḥ || 2-33

2-33. The lion spoke in a human voice that extremely surprised the king who always stood for truth and took the side of those who were noble, who was a gem of the race descending from the ancient king Manu, who was valiant and brave like a lion, and who was already stunned and astonished because inspite of his best efforts his hands had refused to move.

[Note--The king was dumbfounded when he heard the lion speak in a human tongue. He least expected it, and could not believe what he experienced, heard and saw. It was a nightmare for him, something straight out of mystery movie.]

Verse no. 34:

अलं महीपाल तव श्रमेण प्रयुक्तमप्यस्त्रमितो वृथा स्यात्।

स पादपोन्मूलनशक्ति रंहः शिलोच्चये मूर्च्छति मारुतस्य॥ २-३४

alaṁ mahīpāla tava śrameṇa prayuktamapyastramito vṛthā syāt|
sa pādaponmūlanaśakti raṁhaḥ śiloccaye mūrcchati mārutasya || 2-34

2-34. The lion said to the king: "Oh king! Your attempt to use your arrow and force against me would be futile, just like the case of the wind, that though has a powerful force as it can uproot trees (and fell tall structures or lift the ocean to form giant waves), fails, however, to move a mountain even a fraction.

Verse no. 35:

कैलासगौरं वृषमारुरक्षोः पादार्पणानुग्रहपूतपृष्ठम्।
अवेहि मां किंकरमष्टमूर्तेः कुम्भोदरं नाम निकुम्भमित्रम्॥ २-३५

kailāsagauram vṛṣamārurakṣoḥ pādārpaṇānugrahapūtapṛṣṭham|
avehi mām kiṁkaramaṣṭamūrteḥ kumbhodaram nāma nikumbhamitram || 2-35

2-35. {In this verse, the lion explains to king Dilip why he would not be able to subdue or kill him.}

The lion continued: "Oh king! Once Lord Shiva needed a step to lift himself so that he could mount on the back of his favourite bull (named Nandi) who was as huge and high as the lofty peak of Mt. Kailash (the snow-covered abode of Lord Shiva in the Himalayas). For this purpose, the Lord had put his foot on my back to lift himself up, thereby sanctifying me and my body. I am therefore one who has been blessed by Lord Shiva, and am one of Lord Shiva's attendants¹ (whom the Lord employs whenever he wishes to ride on the back of his bull); I am also a friend of Nikumbha² (a famous demon who also had been blessed by Lord Shiva that no weapon would kill him; he was the son of Pandu, and his story appears in connection with the story of Lord Krishna).

[Note--¹The lion means to say that since Lord Shiva has blessed his body, and employs him whenever the Lord needs a stepping stool to get on the back of his bull Nandi, so therefore he enjoys Lord Shiva's patronage, and hence any attempt to harm or kill him would invite the Lord's wrath. If the king shoots an arrow, it would bounce off the lion's back because it has been hardened like a rock once Lord Shiva set his foot on it. This is why the king's hands got paralysed while trying to shoot an arrow at the lion because it would mean injuring or killing one of Lord Shiva's attendants, which is not possible for any human being. By the grace of Lord Shiva, the lion's body had become hard like a shield that would protect his soul.

²Nikumbha: Nikumbha had wanted to live for thousands of years. He did penance to propitiate Lord Shiva and asked a boon that he should live for many thousands of years, and that no weapon made by humans, gods or demons would be able to kill him. Lord Shiva told him that in this mortal world this is not possible. Then Nikumbha asked that he may have three bodies with the same soul, thereby ensuring that he can survive for the third time should he be killed by some means for two times. Lord Shiva granted him the boons with a caveat that he would be killed only if he did something not acceptable to

Brahmins or gods. Nikumbha once kidnapped Bhanumati, a mistake that nullified Lord Shiva's boon as it was against principles of lawful existence. Finally he was slayed by Lord Krishna.]

Verse no. 36:

अमुं पुरः पश्यसि देवदारुं पुत्रीकृतोऽसौ वृषभध्वजेन।
यो हेमकुम्भस्तननिःसृतानां स्कन्दस्य मातुः पयसां रसज्ञः॥ २-३६

amurṁ puraḥ paśyasi devadāruṁ putrīkṛto'sau vṛṣabhadhvajena|
yo hemakumbhastananiḥsṛtānāṁ skandasya mātuh payasāṁ rasajñaḥ || 2-36

2-36. Do you see that deodar cedar tree in front of you? That tree had been nourished by the milk flowing from the golden pot-like bosom of the mother of Kartikeya (the son of Lord Shiva). Hence, Lord Shiva has regarded that tree as one of his de-facto sons (because the tree had tasted and been nourished by the milk flowing from the bosom of Parvati, Lord Shiva's consort and mother of Kartikeya).

[Note--The deodar cedar tree is also called the 'wood of the gods' from the Sanskrit word 'devadaru'. It is an evergreen tree found in the Himalayas.]

Verse no. 37:

कण्डूयमानेन कटं कदाचिद्वन्यद्विपेनोन्मथिता त्वगस्य।
अथैनमद्रेस्तनया शुशोच सेनान्यमालीढमिवासुरास्त्रैः॥ २-३७

kaṇḍūyamānena kaṭaṁ kadācidvanyadvipenonmathitā tvagasya|
athainamadrestanayā śuśoca senānyamālīḍhamivāsuraśtraiḥ || 2-37

2-37. Once it so happened that a wild elephant had got an itch, so it had rubbed its temples against the deodar cedar tree so vigorously that some portion of the tree's bark got dislodged or sheared off. This damage to the tree had saddened Parvati so much that she bemoaned over it as if her son Kartikeya himself had been injured by some kind of weapon of demons.

Verse no. 38:

तदाप्रभृत्येव वनद्विपानां त्रासार्थमस्मिन्नहमद्रिकुक्षौ।
व्यापरितः शूलभृता विधाय सिंहत्वमङ्कागतसत्त्ववृत्तिः॥ २-३८

tadāprabhṛtyeva vanadvipānāṁ trāsārthamasminnahamadrikukṣau|
vyāparitaḥ śūlabhṛtā vidhāya siṁhatvamaṅkāgatasattvavṛttiḥ || 2-38

2-38. At that time, Lord Shiva had appointed me to guard this area from all wild elephants and other intruders by transforming me into a lion who is naturally empowered to prey on animals and kill them for food in order to survive. The Lord had assigned this cave to me as my dwelling place.

Verse no. 39:

तस्यालमेषा क्षुधितस्य तृप्त्यै प्रदिष्टकाला परमेश्वरेण।

उपस्थिता शोणितपारणा मे सुरदिवषश्चान्द्रमसी सुधेव॥ २-३९

tasyālameṣā kṣudhitasya tr̥ptyai pradiṣṭakālā parameśvareṇa|
upasthitā śoṇitapāraṇā me suradvīṣaścāndramasī sudheva || 2-39

2-39 I was hungry, and at the time of my regular meal this cow presented itself to me as if Lord Shiva had himself sent the prey to me so that I can satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst by eating her and drinking her blood which would be as satisfying to me as Rahu is when it sucks the nectar stored in the moon, the heavenly pitcher of this ambrosia, during the time of the lunar eclipse.

[Note--According to belief, the demon Rahu, which is in the form of a severed head of the demon of the same name, gobbles up the moon through his mouth during the lunar eclipse, and after sucking nectar as much as it is needed to quench his thirst, Rahu ejects the moon through the cavity formed by the severed neck at the lower end of his head.

The lion says that likewise he would also gobble the cow, suck its blood like Rahu sucks the nectar of the moon, and then eject the cow's remains from its lower intestines, i.e. the anus.

According to ancient astronomy, Rahu remains almost fixed at a particular point in the night sky, and it is the moon that approaches it at some point of time during the year while orbiting the earth. Likewise, the lion remains confined to his cave, and it was the cow that entered it during one of its round of the meadows to graze. So we see the analogy is apt.

One unsaid thing is to be noted here. After Lord Shiva had appointed Kumbodhar in the form of a lion to protect the area, where deodar trees grew, from wild elephants and other animals, no animal had dared to come near the vicinity of the protected part of the forest out of fear of the lion. The result was that the lion had become famished. He had become so weak that he rarely ventured out to hunt prey to quench its hunger and thirst. When the lion saw the cow Nandini entering its cave, he thought that Lord Shiva developed mercy on him and sent this cow so that the lion, who was actually obeying the Lord's commands and was a de-facto servant of Lord Shiva, can have something to feed upon. The lion says that he cannot be accused of running after the cow to hunt it down, but the cow had voluntarily entered the cave where he lives. So what wrong is there if he feeds upon the cow when the latter has voluntarily offered itself to him as food?]

Verse no. 40:

स त्वं निवर्तस्व विहाय लज्जां गुरोर्भवान्दर्शितशिष्यभक्तिः।
शस्त्रेण रक्ष्यं यदशक्यरक्षं न तद्यशः शस्त्रभृतां क्षिणोति॥ २-४०

sa tvaṁ nivartasva vihāya lajjāṁ gurorbhavāndarśitaśiṣyabhaktiḥ|
śastreṇa rakṣyaṁ yadaśakyaṛakṣaṁ na tadyaśaḥ śastrabhṛtāṁ kṣiṇoti || 2-40

2-40. You have done your duty to try to protect the cow to the best of your ability as ordered by the sage. But you must not feel ashamed at your inability to use the strength of your arms to protect the cow because there are certain thing before which all arms and valour fail because it is destined by destiny to be such, and over which you, or any other living being for that matter, have no control.

If a certain thing cannot be saved by use of the strength of arms and weapons, then the warrior is not to be blamed for the failure as it is beyond his control and authority.

So therefore, you should go back without any burden of guilt or shame.

{You had come to her help as soon as you heard her wails, without wasting a second. Then you had tried to shoot an arrow at me to free her, but your hands became paralysed. You are wise and intelligent enough to realise that there must surely be something behind these developments as ordained by fate, and over which you have no control. So therefore you are not guilty of violating the sage's commands. Of course you would have been guilty if you hadn't tried your best, but the fiat of fate and the dictate of destiny cannot be changed or overruled or undermined or set aside by anyone. Every creature has to die one day in this mortal world, and its death is determined by its destiny, and not by anyone or anything else. If this cow has to die today, you simply cannot save it, and if she is to live then I too can't kill her! So therefore, you ought not to feel guilty of not doing your duty sufficiently enough to protect the cow as ordered by the sage, and neither should you feel humiliated and ashamed at your own strength, courage and valour. Your prestige and honour are not at all affected.}"

Verse no. 41:

इति प्रगल्भं पुरुषाधिराजो मृगाधिराजस्य वचो निशम्य।
प्रत्याहतास्त्रो गिरिशप्रभावादात्मन्यवज्ञां शिथिलीचकार॥ २-४१

iti pragalbhaṁ puruṣādhirājo mṛgādhirājasya vaco nīsamya|
pratyāhatāstro giriśaprabhāvādātmanyavajñāṁ śithilīcakāra || 2-41

2-41. Hearing the bold and confident words of the lion, the brave king, who was armed with a powerful weapon (the bow and arrow), however realised that his hands had been paralysed so that he would not be able to use his weapon against the lion, because the latter was blessed by Lord Shiva. This realisation somewhat assuaged his feelings and calmed him down; he overcame his anger and regret that he could not protect the cow (for the aforesaid reason over which he had no say).

Verse no. 42:

प्रत्यब्रवीच्चैनमिषुप्रयोगे तत्पूर्वभङ्गे वितथप्रयत्नः।

जडीकृतस्त्र्यम्बकवीक्षणेन वज्रं मुमुक्षन्निव वज्रपाणिः॥ २-४२

pratyabravīccainamiṣuprayoge tatpūrvabhāṅge vitathaprayatnaḥ|
jaḍīkṛtastryambakavīkṣaṇena vajraṁ mumukṣanniva vajrapāṇiḥ || 2-42

2-42. The valiant warrior king (Dilip) who had failed to use his weapon in the first instance (when his hands were paralysed as he tried to shoot an arrow at the lion), was now all the more dumbfounded as he could not find a way out of his dilemma. His condition was like that of Indra, the powerful king of gods, who is so numbed by the angry glare of Lord Shiva, asking him to desist from using his powerful weapon called Vajra (the thunderbolt) against someone who has been blessed by Lord Shiva, that it seems that Indra has become paralysed.

[Note--In this analogy, king Dilip is compared to Indra, the powerful king of gods. Though Indra is very powerful and a god himself, yet he dares not disobey Lord Shiva by using his weapon to attack someone who has been blessed by Shiva. Similarly, though king Dilip is a very able and powerful king, he dared not harm the lion as the latter had the blessings of Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva is said to be so powerful that when he glares angrily at someone and opens his third eye, located in the middle of his forehead, in anger, the target of his wrath is burnt to ashes in a moment by the dart of fire that springs out from this third eye like a blinding ray of a laser beam.]

Verse no. 43:

संरुद्धचेष्टस्य मृगेद्र कामं हास्यं वचस्तद्यदहं विवक्षुः।

अन्तर्गतं प्राणभृतां हि वेद सर्वं भवान्भावमतोऽभिधास्ये॥ २-४३

saṁruddhaceṣṭasya mṛgedra kāmam hāsyam vacastadyadahaṁ vivakṣuḥ|
antargataṁ prāṇabhṛtām hi veda sarvaṁ bhavānbhāvamato'bhidhāsyē || 2-43

2-43. King Dilip said to the lion: "Oh lord (king) of the animals of the wild (mṛgedra)! What I am about to say may perhaps seem very absurd and ridiculous at its face value because I have failed in my efforts to protect the cow. Yet I have gathered courage to speak my mind because you are a blessed soul, someone who had been blessed by Lord Shiva himself, and so it is supposed that you know the inner thoughts of all living beings, and therefore I expect you to be already aware of my thoughts which I am about to put in words.

Verse no. 44:

मान्यः स मे स्थावरजंगमानां सर्गस्थितिप्रत्यवहारहेतुः।
गुरोरपीदं धनमाहितग्नेर्नश्यत्पुरस्तादनुपेक्षणीयम्॥ २-४४

mānyaḥ sa me sthāvarajamgamānān sargasthitipratyavahārahetuḥ|
gurorapīdaṁ dhanamāhitagnernaśyatpurastādanupekṣaṇīyam || 2-44

2-44. Lord Shiva, who is the Supreme Lord of this creation, the Lord who has brought about the birth of all animate as well as inanimate aspects of this creation, such as the living beings as well as the trees and mountains respectively, who then takes care of his creation and protects it, and who finally brings about the end of this creation, is the Lord who is revered and worshipped by me too.

But at the same time, it is not proper and good for me to neglect the welfare of this cow and witness its ruin because this cow is blessed by my guru sage Vashistha, and is used by him as part of his religious activities; it would be a horrendous and unpardonable sin on my part (if I neglect the welfare of this cow as I am obliged and duty-bound to protect it, especially when the sage has entrusted its safety in my hands).

[Note--King Dilip clearly tells the lion the dilemma he finds himself in. He tells the lion that he himself has great respect for Lord Shiva, and reveres him and worship the Lord as his personal deity. Since the lion has invoked Lord Shiva's name to imply that he enjoys immunity from punishment, the king tells the lion that the latter must keep in mind that the king too is a blessed soul who has the blessings of Lord Shiva, and therefore he too enjoys immunity from Shiva's wrath, especially when he is carrying out his duty to protect a sage's cow.

Since they are both devotees of the same Lord, they are on the same platform, and hence are sort of brothers. Therefore, the king implies that he will spare the lion because the latter is a devotee of Lord Shiva like the king is himself, and one devotee is not expected to kill another devotee of the same Lord. The king counters the lion's threat of invoking Lord Shiva's wrath if he kills the lion.

The king also subtly hints that now he has realised why his hands were paralysed when he had tried to string the bow, mount the arrow and shoot at the lion--it was because Lord Shiva had intervened and prevented him from committing a sin of killing someone who had the privilege of being blessed by the Lord, was here to obey the Lord's commands, and was simply acting in the natural way as any lion would do to feed itself when it attacked the cow. This realisation helped to soothe the king's frayed nerves and helped him overcome his frustration.

But, that said, there are other equally important issues to be considered at this juncture. The cow is not an ordinary animal, and neither the king owns it. It belongs to the revered sage Vashistha, and the sage had entrusted its safety in the hands of the king. Would it not be outrageous to accept the killing of the cow while the king is personally present at the spot to protect it? Would it not be equivalent to compromising on the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity and propriety) and disobeying the instructions of a revered sage (Vashistha) to let the cow be killed in the presence of the king who is supposed to protect it, and that also on the specific instructions of the sage?]

Verse no. 45:

स त्वं मदीयेन शरीरवृत्तिं देहेन निर्वर्तयितुं प्रसीद।
दिनावसानोत्सुकबालवत्सा विसृज्य तां धेनुरियं महर्षेः॥ २-४५

sa tvaṁ madīyena śarīravṛttim dehena nirvartayitum prasīda|
dināvasānotsukabālavatsā visrjya tāṁ dhenuriyaṁ maharṣeḥ || 2-45

2-45. I request you (the lion) to sustain your body and satisfy your hunger by partaking of my body, and spare this cow named Nandini who belongs to the great sage Vashistha. The cow's young calf would be expecting her to come back home in the evening, so let her go. I am willingly offering myself to you in her place."

Verse no. 46:

अथान्धकारं गिरिगह्वराणां दंष्ट्रामयूखैः शकलानि कुर्वन्।
भूयः स भूतेश्वरपार्श्ववर्ती किञ्चिद्विहस्यार्थपतिं बभाषे॥ २-४६

thāndhakāraṁ girigahvarāṇāṁ daṁṣṭrāmayūkhaiḥ śakalāni kurvan|
bhūyaḥ sa bhūteśvarapārśvavartī kiṁcidvīhasyārthapatiṁ babhāṣe || 2-46

2-46. After hearing the king's submission, the lion, a servant of Lord Shiva, smiled broadly and said to the king even as the sparkle of the lion's large pointed teeth virtually removed the darkness of the cave.

Verse no. 47:

एकातपत्रं जगतः प्रभुत्वं नवं वयः कान्तमिदं वपुश्च।
अल्पस्य हेतोर्बहु हातुमिच्छन्विचारमूढः प्रतिभासि मे त्वम्॥ २-४७

ekātapatraṁ jagataḥ prabhutvaṁ navam vayaḥ kāntamidaṁ vapuśca|
alpasya hetorbahu hātumicchannvicāramūḍhaḥ pratibhāsi me tvam || 2-47

2-47. {The lion continued--} "You appear to be a fool to me by offering yourself to me to be devoured instead of the humble and ordinary animal called a cow. You are stupid to bargain unrivalled sway over the realm as its emperor and its attendant privileges for a lifetime, and you wish to sacrifice your beautiful and youthful human body for the sake of a trifle thing as preserving the life of a lowly animal as the cow. I think you lack proper wisdom and are devoid of prudence in making this ludicrous offer of sacrificing yourself in place of a lowly cow.

Verse no. 48:

भूतानुकम्पा तव चेदियं गौरेका भवेत्स्वस्तिमती त्वदन्ते।

जीवन्पुनः शश्वदुपप्लवेभ्यः प्रजाः प्रजानाथ पितेव पासि॥ २-४८

bhūtānukampā tava cediyaṁ gaurekā bhavetsvastimatī tvadante|
jīvanpunaḥ śaśvadupaplavebhyaḥ prajāḥ prajānātha piteva pāsi || 2-48

2-48. If indeed it is your view that you are duty-bound to protect a creature's life by saving this cow, then you would be saving only one life, but if you live then you would be saving not only your own life but would also be able to protect and save countless other lives who are under your care and protection by the virtue of you being a great, merciful, kind and compassionate king of the realm. If you die, then won't all your subjects become orphaned because a king is like a father to his subjects? {Tell me then, which of the two options is better and wiser?}

Verse no. 49:

अथैकधेनोरपराधचण्डाद्गुरोः कृशानुप्रतिमादिबभेषि।

शक्योऽस्य मन्युर्भवता विनेतुं गाः कोटिशः स्पर्शयता घटोदनीः॥ २-४९

athaikadhenoraparādhacaṇḍādguroḥ kṛśānupratimādbibheṣi|
śakyo'sya manyurbhavatā vinetuṁ gāḥ koṭīśaḥ sparśayatā ghaṭodhnīḥ || 2-49

2-49. If you are scared of offending your guru (preceptor and royal priest, sage Vashistha) and incurring his fiery wrath because his one cow named Nandini could not be saved by you, then you can soothe his feelings and calm his anger down by donating to him thousands of milch cows who have large pot-like udders (i.e. healthy milk-giving cows).

Verse no. 50:

तद्रक्ष कल्याणपरम्पराणां भोक्तारमूर्जस्वलमात्मदेहम्।

महीतलस्पर्शनमात्रभिन्नमृद्धं हि राज्यं पदमैन्द्रमाहुः॥ २-५०

tadrakṣa kalyāṇaparamparāṇāṁ bhoktāramūrjasvalamātmadeham|
mahītalasparśanamātrabhinnamṛddhaṁ hi rājyaṁ padamaindramāhuḥ || 2-50

2-50. Therefore, you should preserve your robust and healthy body that is meant to enjoy the privileges of a great kingdom on earth as its ruler. A prosperous and wealthy kingdom on earth is called a 'heaven on earth', and its ruler is regarded on the same footing as Indra, the king of heaven."

Verse no. 51:

एतावदुक्त्वा विरते मृगेन्द्रे प्रतिस्वनेनास्य गुहागतेन।
शिलोच्चयोऽपि क्षितिपालमुच्चैः प्रीत्या तमेवार्थमभाषतेव॥ २-५१

etāvaduktvā virate mṛgendre pratisvanenāśya guhāgatena|
śiloccayo'pi kṣitipālamuccaiḥ prītyā tamevārthamabhāṣateva || 2-51

2-51. When the lion became silent after saying whatever it had to say, the words echoed in the cave and resonated so much that they could well be heard at the entrance of the cave and even outside of it, giving the impression to the king that the mountain itself was loudly endorsing the lion.

Verse no. 52:

निशम्य देवानुचरस्य वाचं मनुष्यदेवः पुनरप्युवाच।
धेन्वा तदध्यासितकातराक्ष्या निरीक्ष्यमाणः सुतरां दयालुः॥ २-५२

niśamya devānucarasya vācam manuṣyadevaḥ punarapyuvāca|
dhenvā tadadhyāsita-kātarākṣyā nirīkṣyamāṇaḥ sutarāṁ dayāluḥ || 2-52

2-52. When the king heard the words of the lion, he observed that the terrified cow Nandini was looking at him with terrified eyes full of distress and urgency as if she was pleading with him to show mercy on her and seeking protection from her attacker, the lion.

Hence, the compassionate king spoke to the lion once again as follows--

Verse no. 53:

क्षतात्किल त्रायत इत्युदग्रः क्षत्रस्य शब्दो भुवनेषु रूढः।
राज्येन किं तद्विपरीतवृत्तेः प्राणैरुपक्रोशमलीमसैर्वा॥ २-५३

kṣatātkila trāyata ityudagraḥ kṣatrasya śabdaḥ bhuvaneṣu rūḍhaḥ|
rājyena kiṁ tadviparītavṛtṭeḥ prāṇairupakrośamalīmasairvā || 2-53

2-53. The king told the lion: "It is a famous saying that characterises the Kshatriya race (the warrior class to which king Dilip belonged), and it is this-- 'one who protects others from calamity and destruction when they are in great distress, is a true Kshatriya'. Anyone who acts otherwise, even though he may be born as a Kshatriya, should have no right to rule over his subjects whom he can't protect, and he has no right to claim himself as a true-blooded member of this respected and honourable race.

What use is therefore a kingdom to me if I fall foul of this noble principle and go astray from my duties by dishonouring this time-tested and ancient tradition of my race (by failing to protect someone who I am supposed to protect, in this instance the cow, and

finding excuses for my failure, while at the same time wishing to live to enjoy the privileges of kingdom of a great kingdom)?

[Note--The noble king Dilip clearly indicates his priorities. For him, adhering to principles and laws of Dharma of a Kshatriya are of paramount importance, and finding an easy way out or an easy excuse in order to preserve himself while sacrificing these principles is not at all an option. Therefore, he must protect the cow named Nandini whatever may happen.]

Verse no. 54:

कथं नु शक्योऽनुनयो महर्षेर्विश्राणनाच्चान्यपयस्विनाम्।
इमामनूनां सुरभरवेहि रुद्रौजसा तु प्रहृतं त्वयास्याम्॥ २-५४

katham nu śakyo'nunayo maharṣerviśrāṇanāccānyapayasvinām|
imāmanūnām surabheravehi rudraujasā tu prahr̥taṁ tvayāsyām || 2-54

2-54. As regards your advise that I can calm sage Vashistha's anger at losing this cow Nandini by gifting him thousands of other healthy milk-giving cows, you are gravely mistaken, because don't think this cow to be ordinary animal, for she is an off-spring of the heavenly holy cow called Kamdhenu (who is an all wish-fulfilling cow of the gods), and as such she cannot be replaced.

You have been successful in attacking and subduing Nandini by relying on the blessings of Lord Shiva which you think has empowered you to do whatever you wish to do. You simply couldn't have seized and subdued this privileged cow Nandini if you had relied on your own strength, but you had misused Lord Shiva's blessings to act recklessly in this particular case.

[Note--King Dilip has boldly rebuked the lion and sternly trounced the latter's misplaced sense of superiority and invincibility. He politely but emphatically tells the lion that the latter seems to have crossed a red line by attacking Kamdhenu's off-spring Nandini, a development that would surely doom him, for none of the gods, including Lord Shiva, would endorse this killing.

Further, the lion has no right to preach the king what to and what not to do, for the king knows well enough his duties, as well as what he is expected to do and how he is expected to behave. The king implies that he is holding himself back and desisting from slaying the lion just because the latter is Lord Shiva's devotee and is blessed by the Lord, otherwise he wouldn't have had the opportunity to lecture the king!]

Verse no. 55:

सेयं स्वदेहार्पणनिष्क्रयेण न्याय्या मया मोचयितुं भवत्तः।
न पारणा स्याद्विहता तवैवं भवेदलुप्तश्च मुनेः क्रियार्थः॥ २-५५

seyam svadehārpaṇaniṣkrayeṇa nyāyyā mayā moicayitum bhavattaḥ|
na pāraṇā syādvihatā tavaivam bhavedaluptaśca muneḥ kriyārthaḥ || 2-55

2-55. It is proper and fit for me to offer my own body to you in place of Nandini so that you can satisfy your hunger by devouring me. By this way, both the purposes would be served--i.e. one, you would not be deprived of your meal, and two, sage Vashistha would not be deprived of his prized cow which is essential to him as part of his religious rituals and ceremonies.

{Its a win-win situation for all--one, I will fulfill my duties of protecting the cow and preserving the honour of my Kshatriya race and family; two, you will get your quota of meal; and three, sage Vashistha's beloved cow Nandini would be restored to him.}

Verse no. 56:

भवानपीदं परवानवैति महान्नि यत्नस्तव देवदारौ।

स्थातुं नियोक्तुर्न हि शक्यमग्रे विनाश्य रक्ष्यं स्वयमक्षतेन॥ २-५६

bhavānapīdam paravānavaiti mahānhi yatnastava devadārau|
sthātum niyokturna hi śakyamagre vināśya rakṣyam svayamakṣatena || 2--56

2-56. Since you yourself are under obligations to obey your Lord's (i.e. Shiva's) commands with respect to the deodar trees which you are to protect, you can surely understand and realise my position as I too am under an obligation to protect this cow Nandini under the orders of a revered sage named Vashistha. If you can't disobey the orders of Lord Shiva, I likewise too can't disobey my orders given to me by sage Vashistha.

It is not proper and wise for a servant to stand before his lord after failing to do his duty of protecting something or someone the lord had assigned him to protect in spite of the chance of protecting them just because one wishes to preserve one's own self by sacrificing the entity to be protected.

Say, what answer would a servant like me give to his lord, in my case sage Vashistha, when the latter enquires why I show no signs of struggle while attempting to save the cow from the lion's attack, why are there no injuries on my body, and why all my arrows are found intact in their quiver if I had made efforts to shoot them at the lion.

[Note--King Dilip's argument is logical and it left the lion without an answer. What answer would he, the king, give to sage Vashistha when he goes back to the hermitage and inform the sage that he allowed the cow to be killed by a lion when he could have bravely fought it to death in order to protect the cow. Wouldn't it be a matter of shame and utter humiliation? Wouldn't it be betraying the sage's trust in him and his ability to protect an important asset of the sage?

The obvious challenging question for the lion was this: supposing an animal tells the lion that he can feed upon as many animals as he wishes but with the condition that the lion allows wild elephants to rub their itchy skin against the deodar trees, or even

uproot the trees for pleasure. Say, what answer would the lion give to Lord Shiva in this situation?]

Verse no. 57:

**किमप्यहिंस्यस्तव चेन्मतोऽहं यशःशरीरे भव मे दयालुः।
एकान्तविध्वंसिषु मद्विधानं पिण्डेष्वनास्था खलु भौतिकेषु॥ २-५७**

kimapyahimsyastava cenmato'haṁ yaśaḥśarīre bhava me dayāluḥ|
ekāntavidhvamsiṣu madvidhānaṁ piṇḍeṣvanāsthā khalu bhautikeṣu || 2-57

2-57. Meanwhile, if you think that it will not be proper and advisable to kill me instead of the cow, then have mercy on me and help me preserve my reputation and honour instead of my physical body which is perishable nevertheless. I am in a fix because I am bound by my duties and responsibilities, so I need your special consideration given the precarious I find myself in. Wise people know that the physical body of all living beings is made of five elements called Mahabhuts, and that it is a mortal entity that is bound to perish one day. So what great objective would be achieved if my physical body is preserved at the cost of sacrificing my honour as well as my failure to honour the sage's trust in me if you do not heed my request to devour me and spare the cow of the sage?

[Note--The five Mahabhuts are also called the 'Pancha-Bhuts'. They refer to the sky, air, fire, water and earth, i.e. the five elements of Nature, that together make up the physical body of a living being. This is a mortal world, and everything and everyone who is here is bound to die or perish one day or another. So the king tells the lion that though the latter thinks that it is not good to kill the king as he is responsible to take care of his countless subjects for whom he is like a father, and his death would virtually make them orphans, yet a day would come, sooner or later, when it is bound to happen that the king dies like all human beings do. So therefore no great purpose would be served if the king lives a dishonourable life by sacrificing his principles and falling from esteem by failing to do his duty towards the sage who had entrusted the safety of the cow in his hands.

The king says that since one of them has to die at the hands of the lion, it would be better if it is the king instead of the cow. That is why the king uses the words 'have mercy on me and consider my precarious situation', meaning that he asks the lion to help him to do his duties and die a noble and honourable death, instead of living an ignoble life of shame, ridicule and scorn.]

Verse no. 58:

**संबन्धमाभाषणपूर्वमाहुर्वृत्तः स नौ संगतयोर्वनान्ते।
तद्भूतनाथानुग नार्हसि त्वं संबन्धिनो मे प्रणयं विहन्तुम्॥ २-५८**

sambandhamābhāṣaṇapūrvamāhurvṛttaḥ sa nau saṁgatayorvanānte|
tadbhūtanāthānuga nārhasi tvaṁ sambandhino me praṇayaṁ vihantum || 2-58

2-58. Though we are strangers to each other, but a polite conversation like the one we are having at present in this forest makes us friendly towards one another. As such, we must appreciate the views of each other. I have appreciated your kind views regarding me, that you do not want to kill me to satisfy your hunger because wish me to live to enjoy the fruits of life and privileges associated with kingship, and at the same time carry on with me responsibilities towards my subjects who look up to me for their welfare and protection. In a similar vein, you, who are a follower of Lord Shiva like I am, must also understand the dilemma I am in if I do not manage to save this cow.

So therefore, oh the follower of Lord Shiva, would it not be improper for you not to heed a request from your friend like me (especially when we both are devotees of Lord Shiva and doing our assigned duties)? Indeed, you are not expected to reject a friend's request made to you under these circumstances."

Verse no. 59:

तथेति गामुक्तवते दिलीपः सद्यःप्रतिष्ठम्भविमुक्तबाहुः।
सन्न्यस्तशस्त्रो हरये स्वदेहमुपानयत्पिण्डमिवामिषस्य॥ २-५९

tatheiti gāmuktavate dilīpaḥ sadyaḥpratiṣṭambhavamuktabāhuḥ|
sannyastaśastro haraye svadehamupānayatpiṇḍamivāmiṣasya || 2-59

2-59. When the lion gave his consent by saying, 'as you wish', king Dilip immediately dropped his weapons from his hands, which by now had regained their senses, and presented himself before the lion as if his body was merely a loaf of flesh, like one presents a loaf of meat to a guest to be partaken of by the latter to satisfy his hunger.

[Note--The king had no fear or regrets, nor did he tremble at the time of falling down before the lion, expecting to be devoured in a moment. He was rather contented that he is dying an honourable and noble death while doing his duty.]

Verse no. 60:

तस्मिन्क्षणे पालयितुः प्रजानामुत्पश्यतः सिंहनिपातमुग्रम्।
अवाङ्मुखस्योपरि पुष्पवृष्टिः पपात विद्याधरहस्तमुक्ता॥ २-६०

tasminkṣaṇe pālayituḥ prajānāmutpaśyataḥ simhanipātamugram|
avāṅmukhasyopari puṣpavṛṣṭiḥ papāta vidyādharahastamuktā || 2-60

2-60. Just at that moment when the noble king, who had always served his subjects with a bowed head as a mark of his modesty and humbleness, was expecting that the lion would pounce upon him, there was a shower of flowers upon him. These flowers were showered by celestial beings called Vidyadhars.

[Note--Vidyadhars are celestial beings who are a type of demi-gods who are midway in heavenly hierarchy, standing between the Gods on the one hand and the other junior Gods such as the Gandharvas, the celestial musicians, and the Kinnars, the celestial singers and dancers on the other. Vidyadhars are those spirits which are wise and enlightened amongst their peers who are on the threshold of becoming Gods, but they could not do so because they had some shortcomings which prevented them from acquiring the highest stature of becoming a God. So they are regarded as senior in the hierarchy of heavenly system of Gods.

They are believed to be attendants of Lord Shiva, and have their terrestrial abode in the higher reaches of the Himalayas near Mt. Kailash, the abode of their patron god, Lord Shiva.

The word 'Vidyadhar' implies that they embody knowledge in all its manifestations; they are knowledge-holders or wise creatures well versed in all spheres of wisdom, erudition and knowledge (Vidya = knowledge; Dhar = hold). They are said to be messengers of Lord Shiva and other chief gods, as well as heavenly observers who judge a situation or event exclusively on merit. As messengers who have a presence in this mortal world as well as in the heaven, they act as intermediaries between the gods and humans.

The Vidyadhars had been closely watching the proceedings, and when they observed that the king did not deviate from his path of following the principles of Dharma, they showered flowers upon him to praise and honour him, as well as to celebrate the occasion.]

Verse no. 61:

उत्तिष्ठ वत्सेत्यमृतायमानं वचो निशम्योत्थितमुत्थितः सन्।
ददर्श राजा जननीमिव स्वां गामग्रतः प्रस्रविर्णी न सिंहम्॥ २-६१

uttiṣṭha vatsetyamṛtāyamānaṁ vaco niśamyotthitamutthitaḥ san|
dadarśa rājā jananīmiva svāṁ gāmagrataḥ prasraviṇīm na siṁham || 2-61

2-61. "Oh Son! Get up"--king Dilip heard these reassuring, life-restoring and soothing words coming out of the mouth of the cow named Nandini as he raised his head to listen to them. What he saw was very astonishing--there was no trace of a lion, and instead the king saw Nandini with a motherly look in her eyes and milk dripping from her udders.

[Note--When a milk-giving cow sees its calf, milk begins to flow from its udders naturally as an overwhelming emotional reaction on her part to indicate that she is full of love for her calf and wishes to feed it. In this case, milk oozing from the udders of Nandini indicate that she had become very emotional and full of love for the king as he has acted as her true son by offering to sacrifice himself in order to save her.

As we shall read in the following verses, all this scene of a lion trying to kill her and the rest of the development that followed was a delusion created by Nandini to test king Dilip's devotion and service to her. It was a stage-managed event, not a reality, for

there was no lion there who would try to kill the cow. Further, no lion speaks in a human tongue, a tell-tale sign that clearly indicates that the entire episode was an illusion.]

Verse no. 62:

तं विस्मितं धेनुरुवाच साधो मायां मयोद्भाव्य परीक्षितोऽसि।
ऋषिप्रभावान्मयि नान्तकोऽपि प्रभुः प्रहर्तुं किमुतान्यहिंसाः॥ २-६२

taṁ vismitaṁ dhenuruvāca sādho māyāṁ mayodbhāvya parīkṣito'si|
ṛṣiprabhāvānmayi nāntako'pi prabhuḥ prahartuṁ kimutānyahimsrāḥ || 2-62

2-62. Nandini told the astonished king Dilip: "Oh kind-hearted king! I had created an illusion to test your sincerity and devotion to duty. Note that by the grace of the great sage Vashistha, even Yama, the god of death, will not be able to harm me, so then what harm can anyone else, no matter how strong or powerful he might be, do to me? {To wit, no creature can ever dare to attack and kill me, nay, even to think of harming me, when the all-powerful god of death is unable to do it.}

Verse no. 63:

भक्त्या गुरौ मय्यनुकम्पया च प्रीतास्मि ते पुत्र वरं वृणीष्व।
न केवलानां पयसां प्रसूतिमवेहि मां कामदुघां प्रसन्नाम्॥ २-६३

bhaktyā gurau mayyanukampayā ca prītāsmi te putra varam vṛṇiṣva|
na kevalānām payasām prasūtimavehi mām kāmadughām prasannām || 2-63

2-63. I am very pleased with you for your unwavering faith and devotion for sage Vashistha, as well as for being exceptionally kind, merciful and compassionate towards me (as is evident from the conversation you had with the lion, and your offering yourself to be killed by the lion in order to save me).

Therefore, oh son, seek a boon! Don't think that I am an ordinary milk-giving cow, but know me to be someone who can grant one's wishes, whatever they may be. {Realise that I am an off-spring of the heavenly and holy Kamdhenu cow who is famed for granting wishes of all who offer her worship.}

Verse no. 64:

ततः समानीय स मानितार्थी हस्तौ स्वहस्तार्जितवीरशब्दः।
वंशस्य कर्तारमनन्तकीर्तिं सुदक्षिणायां तनयं ययाचे॥ २-६४

tataḥ samāniya sa mānitārthī hastau svahastārjitavīraśabdaḥ|
vaṁśasya kartāramanantakīrtiṁ sudakṣiṇāyām tanayaṁ yayāce || 2-64

2-64. When Nandini urged king Dilip to seek what he wished to have as a boon from her, the noble king, who was ever so courteous and polite, always welcoming and showing respect to his guests, and who had rightly earned the title of a brave and valiant king by the virtue of the strength of his arms, bravery, courage and valour, sought his much-desired wish that he be blessed by a son from his wife Sudakshina, a son who would carry forward the honourable name of his great family, a son who would acquire fame and reputation, and establish himself as being a great inheritor of the family's honour and noble name.

Verse no. 65:

संतानकामाय तथेति कामं राज्ञे प्रतिश्रुत्य पयस्विनी सा।
दुग्ध्वा पयः पत्रपुटे मदीयं पुत्रोपभुङ्क्ष्वेति तमदिदेश॥ २-६५

saṁtānakāmāya tatheti kāmam rājñe pratiśrutya payasvinī sā|
dugdhvā payaḥ patrapuṭe madīyaṁ putropabhuṅkṣveti tamadideśa || 2-65

2-65. Nandini blessed king Dilip by saying 'so will it be', promising him a progeny as desired by the king. Then she told him: "Oh son, milk my udder and collect the milk in a cup made of leaves, and drink it."

Verse no. 66:

वत्सस्य होमार्थविधेश्च शेषं गुरोरनुज्ञामधिगम्य मातः।
ऊधस्यमिच्छामि तवोपभोक्तुं षष्ठांशमुर्व्या इव रक्षितायाः॥ २-६६

vatsasya homārthavidheśca śeṣam guroranujñāmadhigamya mātah|
ūdhasyamicchāmi tavopabhoktuṁ ṣaṣṭhāṁśamurvā iva rakṣitāyāḥ || 2-66

2-66. The king replied: "Oh mother! I wish to wait till your calf has had its fill of your milk, and then I will wait till sage Vashistha has completed his religious rituals in which he uses your milk. After that, I will drink only the sixth part of the left-over portion of the milk by first obtaining the sage's permission to do so (leaving the rest of the milk for the use of residents of the hermitage) just like a righteous king takes a sixth part of the earth's produce and leaves the rest for his subjects."

[Note--This is a stellar example of king Dilip's noble character. He is not greedy nor selfish, and neither is he in a haste to drink the milk quickly so as not to miss the opportunity. There are others who need this nourishing liquid, and as a king it is his responsibility and moral duty to ensure that everyone is well fed and looked after. Whatever is left, the king will be satisfied with it. After all, he is not thirsty or dying for lack of milk; Nandini's milk is like a medicine for him--and like all medicines, this milk is to be taken in a limited and prescribed potion, and not gulped down hastily to fill the

stomach. If Nandini is indeed pleased with him, then even a drop of her milk would serve the purpose.

Further, by this time, the king, who was wise, intelligent and prudent, had become alert and wondered if this advise by Nandini to drink the milk before others who too have a right to drink it is yet another ruse to test his character and devotion to duty as a great king.]

Verse no. 67:

इत्थं क्षितीशेन वसिष्ठधेनुर्विज्ञापिता प्रीततरा बभूव।
तदन्विता हैमवताच्च कुक्षेः प्रत्याययावाश्रममश्रमेण॥ २-६७

ittham kṣitīśena vasiṣṭhadhenurvijñāpitā prītatarā babhūva|
tadanvitā haimavatācca kukṣeḥ pratyāyayāvāśramamaśrameṇa || 2-67

2-67. The holy cow Nandini was very pleased and felt satisfied by king Dilip's reply. So she emerged from the cave and happily accompanied the king to sage Vashistha's hermitage.

Verse no. 68:

तस्याः प्रसन्नेन्दुमुखप्रसादं गुरुर्नृपाणां गुरवे निवेद्य।
प्रहर्षचिह्नानुमितं प्रियायै शशंस वाचा पुनरुक्तमेव॥ २-६८

tasyāḥ prasannendumukhaprasādaṁ gururnṛpāṇāṁ gurave nivedya|
praharṣacihnānumitaṁ priyāyai śaśaṁsa vācā punaruktameva || 2-68

2-68. King Dilip, who was a leader amongst the princely class, and whose face was lit up with happiness and shown like a full moon (because his wishes had been fulfilled), enthusiastically told sage Vashistha all that had transpired between him and Nandini, repeating the words of Nandini for the benefit of the sage as well as his queen Sudakshina.

Verse no. 69:

स नन्दिनीस्तन्यमनिन्दितात्मा सवत्सलो वत्सहुतावशेषम्।
पपौ वसिष्ठेन कृताभ्यनुज्ञः शुभ्रं यशोमूर्तमिवातितृष्णः॥ २-६९

sa nandinīstanyamaninditātmā sadvatsalo vatsahutāvaśeṣam|
papau vasiṣṭhena kṛtābhyanujñāḥ śubhram yaśomūrtamivātitrṣṇaḥ || 2-69

2-69. King Dilip, who had an unblemished character that was worthy of praise, and who was always gracious and compassionate towards those who were good natured and gentlemanly, waited till the cow's calf had its quota of milk, and then sage Vashistha had completed his religious rituals. After that, as he had promised Nandini in the cave, he drank a sixth part of the left-over milk (leaving the rest for other residents of the hermitage) with great reverence as if that milk was an embodiment of fulfilment of his long-cherished wish to have a noble son who would carry forward the line of his honourable family and establish its fame in this world.

Verse no. 70:

प्रातर्यथोक्तव्रतपारणान्ते प्रास्थानिकं स्वस्त्ययनं प्रयुज्य।
तौ दंपती स्वां प्रति राजधानीं प्रस्थापयामास वशी वसिष्ठः॥ २-७०

prātaryathoktavratapāraṇānte prāsthānikam svastyayanam prayujya|
tau daṃpatī svām prati rājadhānīm prasthāpayāmāsa vaśī vasiṣṭhaḥ || 2-70

2-70. The next morning, after duly serving the holy cow Nandini as was his daily routine, the self-realised sage Vashistha, who practiced exemplary control and self-restraint over his sense organs, sprinkled some holy water and grains on the royal couple (i.e. the king and the queen) to bless them, bidding them farewell to proceed towards their kingdom.

Verse no. 71:

प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य हुतं हुताशमनन्तरं भर्तुररुन्धतीं च।
धेनुं सवत्सां च नृपः प्रतस्थे सन्मङ्गलोदग्रतरप्रभावः॥ २-७१

pradakṣiṇīkṛtya hutam hutāśamanantaram bharturarundhatīm ca|
dhenum savatsām ca nṛpaḥ pratasthe sanmaṅgalodagrataraprabhāvaḥ || 2-71

2-71. King Dilip first reverentially circumambulated sage Vashistha as well as the sacred fire that was burning on the altar at the sage's hermitage to pay his respects to them, and then paid his obeisance in the same manner to Anrundhati, the sage's wife, as well as the cow Nandini. After that, being blessed by all of them with good fortune, fulfilment of wishes and attainment of good fame and reputation, king Dilip (along with his queen) set out for his journey back home to his capital city (of Ayodhya).

Verse no. 72:

श्रोत्राभिरामध्वनिना रथेन स धर्मपत्नीसहितः सहिष्णुः।
ययावनुद्घातसुखेन मार्गं स्वेनेव पूर्णेन मनोरथेन॥ २-७२

śrotrābhirāmadvhaninā rathena sa dharmapatnīśahitaḥ sahiṣṇuḥ |
yayāvanudghātasukhena mārgaṁ sveneva pūrṇena manorathena || 2-72

2-72. The king who had endured all hardships associated with the daily routine of strictly following the instructions of sage Vashistha in order to fulfill his wish to have a progeny, was now very cheerful and happy as his efforts had borne fruits. The sounds of the forest as well as the little jerks that he experienced on the unpaved road back home through the countryside as his chariot trundled down the path to his capital seemed very pleasant to him, and neither his ears nor his body felt discomfited by such small disturbances.

[Note--When a person achieves success in some great mission and attains his desired result, then he is in such a joyful state of mind that physical discomfort and distractions don't annoy him. On the contrary, if he faces failure, then even small distractions get on his nerves and makes him fidgety, annoyed and irritated, which manifests in the form of anger and a foul mood.]

Verse no. 73:

तमाहितौत्सुक्यमदर्शनेन प्रजाः प्रजार्थव्रतकर्षिताङ्गम्।
नेत्रैः पपुस्तृप्तिमनाप्नुवद्भिर्नवोदयं नाथमिवौषधीनाम्॥ २-७३

tamāhita utsukyamadarsanena prajāḥ prajārthavratakarṣitāṅgam |
netraiḥ papustr̥ptimanāpnuvadbhirnavodayaṁ nāthamiva uṣadhīnām || 2-73

2-73. Since the king had been absent from his capital for a long time and had become thin because of observing a strict life of austerity at the hermitage of sage Vashistha, his subjects crowded anxiously to gaze at him when he returned to the capital. His subjects eagerly watched his emaciated body like a person watches the second night's moon after the dark phase, with a wish that the king would gradually regain his former personality and a healthy frame just like the moon that goes on getting brighter with each passing day.

[Note--It is obvious and expected that there was anxiety and worry in the minds of his subjects. They had been wondering as to what had might have happened to the king because more than three weeks had elapsed since his departure for sage Vashistha's hermitage. When the king finally returned, he seemed emaciated, a worrying sign. But his gleaming face and cheerful disposition assured his subjects that there was nothing to worry about.]

Verse no. 74:

पुरंदरश्रीः पुरमुत्पताकं प्रविश्य पौरैरभिनन्द्यमानः।
भुजे भुजंगेन्द्रसमानसारे भूयः स भूमेर्धुरमाससञ्जः॥ २-७४

purāṁdaraśrīḥ puramutpatākam praviśya paurairabhinandya mānaḥ |
bhuje bhujaṁgendrasamānasāre bhūyaḥ sa bhūmerdhuramāsaśja || 2-74

2-74. The king whose radiance and glory were similar to that of Indra, the king of heaven, was warmly welcomed by his subjects. Thereafter, he once again resumed his duties as a king and lifted the burden of taking care of his kingdom and its subjects just like Seshnath, the celestial serpent, is believed to hold burden of the earth on its hood.

[Note--Here two analogies or similes are used simultaneously. One relates to Indra and the other to Seshnath. The glory of king Dilip is likened to that of Indra, and his ability to comfortably bear the responsibility of supporting his subjects and taking care of the kingdom is compared to the effortless way Seshnath holds the heavy earth on its hood.]

Verse no. 75:

अथ नयनसमुत्थं ज्योतिरत्रेरिव द्यौः सुरसरिदिव तेजो वह्निनिष्ठयूतमैशम् ।
नरपतिकुलभूत्यै गर्भमाधत्त राज्ञी गुरुभिरभिनिविष्टं लोकपालानुभावैः ॥ २-७५

atha nayanasaṁutthaṁ jyotiratreriva dyauḥ surasaridiva tejo
vahniniṣṭhyūtamaiśam |
narapatikulabhūtyai garbhamādhatta rājñī gurubhirabhiniviṣṭaṁ
lokapālānubhāvaiḥ || 2-75

2-75. In due course, just like the sky bears the full moon with its cool light and its glories, and river Ganges once held the blazing energy of Lord Shiva that fell in its waters, queen Sudakshina bore an embryo that was endowed with the glories and radiance of the Lokpals (the custodians of the world), and which would mature to produce a son that would carry forward the honour and fame of the great family descending from king Raghu, hence called the 'Raghu's-race'.

[Note--The forthcoming son would be like the brilliant moon that stands out prominently against the darkness of the night sky, and that son would also have the ability and power to take care of this world as the Lokpals have.]

इति महाकवि कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये द्वितीयः सर्गः ॥

iti mahākavi kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye dvitīyaḥ sargaḥ ||

Thus ends the 2nd canto of Kalidas' Raghuvaṣam.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-70:

Introduction:

In due course of time, queen Sudakshina became pregnant. King Dilip was very glad when he heard the news from the female attendants of the queen who had been earlier instructed by him to report as soon as signs of pregnancy developed in the queen. The king made proper arrangements for her care and welfare, appointing royal medicine men as well as female nurses who were skilled in this field.

By-and-by, during the tenth month of her pregnancy, the queen gave birth to a handsome son who had all the auspicious signs of great future king. Sage Vashistha, the royal priest and moral preceptor of the family, named the child 'Raghu'. The child grew up under the care and love of his doting parents, and at appropriate time he was put in the care of sage Vashistha for the purpose of his education. The sage, who had been teaching and imparting all types of skills in every field of knowledge to the kings of this dynasty, educated Raghu in all spheres of knowledge, and the young boy acquired expertise and acumens that were needed to fulfil his role and responsibilities as a great king of an ancient kingdom, someone who would bring laurels and honour to his family.

Raghu was eventually married and appointed as the heir-apparent to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya.

King Dilip then embarked on an ambitious project of performing a hundred Ashwamedha Yagyas, or the horse-sacrifices. This was an established tradition in ancient times when a great king would do this sacrifice to assert his authority over his existing kingdom as well as to extend the boundaries of the kingdom to acquire new territories, either directly merging such areas with his own kingdom, or indirectly by subduing other kings and making them pay tributes to the crown regularly. In short, by performing the horse-sacrifice successfully and repeatedly, a great king established himself as a de-facto emperor over a vast surface of the earth. It also granted religious merit to the performer of the sacrifice and enhance his social standing as it involved offering oblations to the sacred fire, chanting of Vedic hymns, worshipping gods and saintly people, as well as doing of charities and making liberal donations.

During this Yagya, king Dilip appointed his son Raghu as the prince who would escort the sacrificial horse and be in command of the army that accompanied the horse when it was set free to go in any direction it wished so that new territories could be acquired, and the king's authority could be asserted in the remotest corners of his existing kingdom or established in newly acquire lands. Since the logistics and paraphernalia required to successfully complete this kind of sacrificial ritual was extraordinarily huge and not within the capabilities of ordinary kings, only emperors with huge resources at their disposal could even think of doing it.

King Dilip successfully completed ninety-nine such Ashwamedha Yagyas, but during the hundredth and the final one, Indra, the jealous and greedy king of heaven, stole the horse so that the king's vows may not be fulfilled, because Indra became afraid that if all the hundred Ashwamedha Yagyas were completed successfully then the patron, in this case king Dilip, would acquire the right to heaven, and that would imply that Indra's crown would be snatched from him. This was primarily the reason why Indra decided to obstruct the completion of the full cycle of a hundred horse-sacrifices.

Young prince Raghu was dumbfounded; he tried his best to locate the horse but failed. But as destiny had designed things, Raghu remembered the mystical powers of the holy cow named Nandini, and so he decided to seek her help. He applied Nandini's urine to his closed eyes, and instantly he had a magical vision where he could clearly see Indra taking the horse away. Prince Raghu immediately challenged Indra and sternly rebuked him for this mischievous and selfish act, something that does not behove of a senior god of heaven. When Indra, driven with his jealousy and greed for the throne of heaven, refused to give the horse, a no-holds barred duel took place between Indra and Raghu. All through this battle, Raghu had an upper hand, so much so that he shot down the flag atop Indra's chariot. This was humiliating for Indra, so the latter hit Raghu with his infallible weapon known as Vajra (thunderbolt) that slammed into the chest of Raghu and severely wounded him. Though it stunned Raghu for a while and left him bleeding with a deep wound, yet he soon got up and admonished Indra for his evil manners.

Observing Raghu's courage, boldness, strength, resilience and determination to pursue his goal till success is obtained, which in this case was to free the horse from the clutches of Indra, the latter was very impressed with the prince. Indra therefore abandoned his aggressive attitude and acquired an amiable demeanour, asking Raghu to seek what he wants. Raghu asked Indra that he wants nothing but the horse so that his father, king Dilip, could complete his vows.

Indra was still sceptical of king Dilip's desires, fearing that if the horse is released and Dilip successfully completes all the hundred Yagyas, then he may claim the throne of heaven by default. So therefore, Indra told Raghu that he can ask for anything except the horse. The young prince's main concern was that his father's vows of attaining religious merit by completing hundred Aswhamedha Yagyas were fulfilled so that he can honourably exit this mortal world and ascend to heaven on the strength of his own religious merit and the positive spiritual energy that he had accumulated over a lifetime of leading an honorable and righteous life as a great king and emperor, rather than having to rely on anyone else's grace and blessing to fulfil his desire, and also neither was he interested in usurping Indra's throne in the heaven, so he asked Indra that if he is reluctant to give the horse then at least he must bless his father, king Dilip, that he would accumulate religious merit and positive energy that is equivalent to completion of hundred Ashwamedh Yagyas so that his desire to go to heaven honourably like a great and successful king is fulfilled.

Indra agreed to it. Raghu then asked Indra to send one of his messengers to his father to inform of the developments so that the king, who had been waiting at the venue of the sacrifice for some news of his son Raghu as well as the horse, will find peace.

Indra assured Raghu that it would be done, and he went to heaven while Raghu returned to his father with a heavy heart because he had failed to rescue the horse. Meanwhile, Indra had already informed king Dilip of what had happened, praising his son and granting the king the boon that his religious objectives of acquiring merit of doing a hundred Ashwamedha Yagyas successfully are being fulfilled.

So when Raghu returned to his father, he found the latter in a cheerful mood, and glad that his son had lived up to his expectations. The king lovingly embraced his son and softly moved his fingers on the wounds inflicted on Raghu by Indra's weapon, feeling sorry for his son's injury caused on his behalf.

Finally, having already achieved all his ambitions in life, king Dilip formally anointed Raghu as the next king of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and he himself went to the forest to lead a life of an ascetic to do penance and austerity as a final step towards attaining liberation and deliverance of his soul from this mortal world of transmigration.

With this background information, now let us proceed with the reading of the text of Canto 3 of Raghuvansham as follows--

Verse no. 1:

अथेप्सितं भर्तुरुपस्थितोदयं सखीजनोद्वीक्षणकौमुदीमुखम्
निदानमिक्ष्वाकुकुलस्य संततेः सुदक्षिणा दौहदलक्षणं दधौ॥ ३-१

athepsitam bharturupasthitodayam sakhījanodvīkṣaṇakaumudīmukham|
nidānamikṣvākukulasya sām̐tateḥ sudakṣiṇā dauhṛdalakṣaṇam dadhau || 3-1

3-1. In due time, queen Sudakshina conceived and showed physical signs of pregnancy that would culminate in the birth of an heir to the crown of the kingdom, a son who would carry forward the honourable name, the glory, the fame and the reputation of this great family of the Ishwaku race. These signs gave joy to the queen's female attendants whose faces lit up like the moonlight (kaumudīmukham), and they were like the stepping stones towards the fulfilment of the desires of king Dilip who wished to have a son who would remove his worries to have an offspring to carry forward the Ikswaku race.

Verse no. 2:

शरीरसादादसमग्रभूषणा मुखेन सालक्ष्यत लोधपाण्डुना
तनुप्रकाशेन विचेयतारका प्रभातकल्पा शशिनेव शर्वरी॥ ३-२

śarīrasādādasamagrabhūṣaṇā mukhena sālakṣyata lodhrapāṇḍunā|
tanuprakāśena viceyatārakā prabhātakalpā śāśineva śarvarī || 3-2

3-2. Due to her delicate frame that had no jewellery to deck it up¹, and because she had developed a pale face resembling the petals of the Lodhra flower (botanical name 'Symplocos racemosa')², queen Sudakshina resembled the faded moon and dimmed stars seen during the phase of the night at dawn just before the sun rises³.

[Note--¹During pregnancy, queen Sudakshina had turned pale and weak so much that ornaments seemed heavy to her. She took them off for convenience.

²The Lodhra flower, whose botanical name is 'Symplocos racemosa', is a small fragrant flower with white petals. In Indian system of medicine known as Ayurveda, it is used for

women's health issues, menstrual disorders, skin problems and digestive disorders due to its astringent, anti-inflammatory and detoxifying properties.

³It is indeed a remarkable example of a simile / analogy. The birth of her son would eliminate gloom and worries of king Dilip who till now was staring at a future full of uncertainty and darkness because he had no off-spring to carry forward his family's line. So the son's birth is compared here to the sun rising and eliminating the darkness of the night, and bringing brightness and cheer on earth and its inhabitants. In the hours just before sun rises, the moon and the stars lose their brightness and become faded. So was the case of queen Sudakshina who became pale and lost her former charm and beauty during the final days before her son, a play on the word that rhymes with 'sun', takes birth, just as the moon and the stars lose their shine just before the advent of the 'sun'.

In fact, this verse has three sets of similes to describe Sudakshina's face: she is compared to the Lodhra flower because her face had become pale, as well as to the fading light of the moon and the stars at dawn time.

Besides the normal weakness occurring during pregnancy, the reason of the queen's face becoming pale is that some women folk in traditional Indian households are said to eat small balls of wet earth during pregnancy, which makes her pale and weak. In all probability, queen Sudakshina was also prone to eating wet soil. This probability is endorsed in the next verse no. 3 where we read that king Dilip smelt damp earth whenever he brought his face close to the queen's in order to kiss or caress her.]

Verse no. 3:

तदाननं मृत्सुरभि क्षितीश्वरो रहस्युपाघ्राय न तृप्तिमाययौ।
करीव सिक्तं पृषतैः पयोमुचां शुचिव्यपाये वनराजिपल्वलम्॥ ३-३

tadānanam mṛtsurabhi kṣitīśvaro rahasyupāghrāya na tr̥ptimāyayau|
karīva siktaṁ pṛṣataiḥ payomucāṁ śucivyapāye vanarājipalvalam || 3-3

3-3. When king Dilip brought his face close to his queen Sudakshina's (when he drew her close to him as a gesture of showing enduring love for her), he smelt an aroma of damp soil or clay emanating from her skin, and he was not fully satisfied no matter how many times he smelt her (because it was a sign that the time of delivery of her son was yet a few month's away, but nevertheless it was a sure sign that she was bearing his son), just like the case of an elephant smelling damp earth near a lake after the first shower of rain at the end of harsh summer months, because the elephant wants more rainfall that would fill the lake, but it is not certain when or after how many days its desire would be fulfilled.

[Note--When the elephant smells wet soil around the lake in the forest after the first shower of rain, it makes the animal happy because it is a good sign that the rainy season is just round the corner, but the elephant is so eager to have a full downfall of rain that this sign leaves him unsatisfied and anxious.

Similarly, when the king smelled his queen's face, it smelt of damp aromatic soil because probably she had applied earth mixed with some aromatic herbs on her face as a face-pack done as a routine exercise to maintain the glow of her skin, and probably her doctors and nurses had advised her to do so. Such applications were usually employed to cool the skin and overcome flushes of heat, pimples and skin rashes that generally occur during pregnancy. It was a welcome sign, a harbinger of good fortunes in the days to come in the form of a much-desired son. So, the king never had enough of it. Besides its emotional value, he wanted to ensure that the queen remains happy that the king loves her when he would bring his face close to hers on a regular basis to kiss her or caress her face.

There is another angle to this smell of moist earth emanating from the queen's face. Some women folk in traditional Indian households are said to eat small balls of wet earth during pregnancy, which makes her pale and weak. In the previous verse no. 2 herein above we have read that the queen's face had turned pale, and she had become weak. This physical feature has direct relation with her tendency to eat mud or soil. This may also be the answer of why she smelled of damp earth or soil when king Dilip brought his face close to hers.]

Verse no. 4:

दिवं मरुत्वानिव भोक्ष्यते भुवं दिगन्तविश्रान्तरथो हि तत्सुतः।
अतोऽभिलाषे प्रथमं तथाविधे मनो बबन्धान्यरसान्विलङ्घ्य सा॥ ३-४

divaṁ marutvāniva bhokṣyate bhuvaṁ digantaviśrāntaratho hi tatsutaḥ ||
ato'bhilāṣe prathamam tathāvidhe mano babandhānyarasānvilaṅghya sā || 3-4

3-4. {This verse attempts to answer why queen Sudakshina took so much interest in eating soil.}

Queen Sudakshina's son would become an emperor of the earth so much so that his chariot would traverse to the furthest corners of the earth without hindrance --this desire of king Dilip was reflected in the queen enjoying eating earth over all other delicacies that were available to her as symbolic of what her son would like to enjoy when he grows up to become an adult. Like her mother, the son (Raghu) would derive pleasure by ruling the entire earth over all other pleasures that would be available to him as a king of a mighty kingdom, just like Indra enjoys ruling over heaven compared to all other privileges available to him.

{The position of Sudikshana's son on earth would be equivalent to that of Indra in heaven--he would have unquestioned and unchallenged sway over the earth like Indra has in heaven.}

[Note--The embryo acquires much of its inner traits, and its basic nature and character while it is still in the mother's womb, and these traits would manifest themselves and define the nature and character of the child when it is born. The mother's food, her environment, her thoughts and emotions, her medical history, her habits and attitudes--all

have a direct impact on the embryo, and later on the child inherits them by default. So therefore, since Sudakshina enjoyed earth more than anything else, so would her son Raghu too like to enjoy earth by way of ruling over it rather than anything else.]

Verse no. 5:

न मे ह्रिया शंसति किञ्चिदीप्सितं स्पृहावती वस्तुषु केषु मागधी
इति स्म पृच्छत्यनुवेलमादृतः प्रियासखीरुत्तरकोसलेश्वरः॥ ३-५

na me hriyā śaṁsati kiñcidīpsitaṁ sprhāvatī vastuṣu keṣu māgadhiḥ
iti sma pṛcchatyanuvelamādr̥taḥ priyāsakhīrutarakosaleśvaraḥ || 3-5

3-5. King Dilip, the lord (ruler; king) of the territory of North Kosal (uttarakosaleśvaraḥ), wondered what his queen wished to have, what was her liking, but was too abashed or reluctant or feeling shy to ask him directly. So, the king repeatedly instructed the trusted maids of the queen: "Find out what desires or wishes or needs the queen has, and inform me about them immediately so that I can make arrangements to fulfil them as soon as it is possible."

Verse no. 6:

उपेत्य सा दोहददुःखशीलतां यदेव वव्रे तदपश्यदाहृतम्
न हीष्टमस्य त्रिदिवेऽपि भूपतेरभूदनासाद्यमधिज्यधन्वनः॥ ३-६

upetya sā dohadaduḥkhaśīlatāṁ yadeva vavre tadapaśyadāhṛtam
na hiṣṭamasya tridive'pi bhūpaterabhūdanāsādyamadhijyadhanvanaḥ || 3-6

3-6. Whatever queen Sudakshina, who was suffering from physical, mental and emotional troubles that are normally associated with pregnancy, wished to have, all such things were made immediately available to her by king Dilip, because being a powerful and resourceful king of a prosperous kingdom who had access to heaven also, nothing was beyond his reach that he would fail to provide to the queen to fulfil her wishes.

Verse no. 7:

क्रमेण निस्तीर्य च दोहदव्यथां प्रचीयमानावयवा रराज सा
पुराणपत्रापगमादनन्तरं लतेव संनद्धमनोज्ञपल्लवा॥ ३-७

krameṇa nistīrya ca dohadavyathāṁ pracīyamānāvayavā rarāja sā
purāṇapatrāpagamādanantaram lateva saṁnaddhamanojñapallavā || 3-7

3-7. After the initial months of distress that accompanied her pregnancy, queen Sudakshina gradually regained her health, charm and composure that was characteristic

of her. She reminded one of a creeper that sheds its old leaves when new ones sprout on it, making the creeper look charming and attractive once again.

[Note--Creeper normally shed their leaves in autumn or winter, and sprout new leaves in spring. Winter days are marked by dullness and lack of energy, while spring that follows it is a harbinger of life, of liveliness and cheer, as well as all round activity and energy.

In this metaphor, the early months of the queen's pregnancy when she lost her energy and became dull, she is compared to the creeper during the onset of autumn and through the winter season. As spring arrives, the creeper jumps back to life, and likewise during the later half of her pregnancy the queen too regained her former charm, liveliness and energy.]

Verse no. 8:

लक्षणान्तरं वर्णयति -

दिनेषु गच्छत्सु नितान्तपीवरं तदीयमानीलमुखं स्तनद्वयम् ।

तिरश्चकार भ्रमराभिलीनयोः सुजातयोः पङ्कजकोशयोः श्रियम् ॥ 3-८ ॥

lakṣaṇāntaram varṇayati -

dineṣu gacchatsu nitāntapīvaram tadīyamānīlamukhaṁ stanadvayam ।

tiraścakāra bhramarābhilīnayohḥ sujātayohḥ paṅkajakośayohḥ śriyam ॥ 3-8 ॥

3-8. This verse describes the charming physical features of queen Sudakshina as she entered the mature phase of her pregnancy:

As the days passed, her deep pink-hued face and her perfectly full bosom eclipsed the beauty of two exquisite lotus buds upon which bees had taken refuge.

[Note--Here, the queen's bosom is likened to two lotus buds over which bees usually hover in order to drink the buds nectar and have access to its pollen. Soon the queen would give birth to her child, and Nature had filled her breasts with milk so that her infant child could be fed properly.

This verse poetically compares the beauty of a woman's face and bosom to that of lotus buds, suggesting their unmatched allure and charm. The imagery of bees and lotuses adds a touch of natural elegance and richness to the description.]

Verse no. 9:

निधानगर्भामिव सागराम्बरां शमीमिवाभ्यन्तरलीनपावकाम्

नदीमिवान्तःसलिलां सरस्वतीं नृपः ससत्त्वां महिषीममन्यत ॥ ३-९

nidhānagarbhāmiva sāgarāmbarāṁ śamīmivābhyantaralīnapāvakām

nadīmivāntaḥsalilāṁ sarasvatīṁ nṛpaḥ sasattvāṁ mahiṣīmamanyata ॥ 3-9

3-9. King Dilip treated queen Sudakshina with great respect and esteem. He regarded her as a personified form of 'earth'¹ that harbours precious stones and minerals in its bowls, as the sacred 'shami tree'² in which the fire is inherently present in a dormant form, and as the legendary sacred 'saraswati river'³ that flows invisible under the surface of the earth.

[Note--¹The earth is a treasury of Nature where virtually an endless supply of valuable minerals and precious stones are found.

²The shami tree is known as the fire tree as the fire element is secretly present inside it but lies dormant until it is ignited. This tree is called 'Prosopis cineraria' in botany. It is also known as Khejri or Banni. It is hardy, drought resistant tree. It thrives in arid and hot climates, and has thorny branches. It is called the fire tree because of its ability to cope with heat outside, as the external heat would have no effect on it because of its inherent hot interiors.

³Saraswati river is a mythical river that is believed to flow just below the surface of the earth. The pilgrimage site known as Prayag is a revered place because three holy rivers have a confluence here--and these three rivers are Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati.

This verse symbolically implies that the son to be born from the queen's womb would have access to all the treasures of earth, would be as energetic and resilient as the shami tree that survives the harshest of hot environments, and would be learned and worthy of praise like the river Saraswati which is sacred and derives its name from goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, intelligence, sagacity and erudition. It is this premonition that motivated king Dilip to highly esteem his wife and show great respect to her.]

Verse no. 10:

प्रियानुरागस्य मनः समुन्नतेर्भुजार्जितानां च दिगन्तसंपदाम्
यथाक्रमं पुंसवनादिकाः क्रिया धृतेश्च धीरः सदृशीर्व्यधत्त सः॥ ३-१०

priyānurāgasya manah samunnaterbhujārjitānām ca digantasampadām |
yathākramam puṁsavanādikāḥ kriyā dhṛteśca dhīraḥ sadṛśīrvyadhatta saḥ || 3-10

3-10. The gracious and wise king was so overwhelmed with joy at these auspicious (above-mentioned signs) that he performed all the rituals associated with advanced pregnancy as advised by the scriptures for the sake of auspiciousness, welfare and good luck for his forthcoming son. He did them out of immense love for his wife, and in accordance with his world-wide fame and stature as a great king and emperor of the realm. Hence, the king performed all the rituals, such as 'punsavana' etc. (puṁsavanādikāḥ)¹, with faith and diligence; he did the rituals with a cheerful heart, spending liberally from his self-acquired wealth.

[Note--¹The ' puṁsavana ' ritual is a Hindu ceremony performed by a man for the all-round welfare of the mother and the child during his wife's pregnancy. It involves chanting of Vedic mantras, doing fire sacrifices, offering charities and making liberal donations, and other associated rituals and deeds as directed by priests. It is meant as a safeguard of the unborn child against negative influences and evil eyes, invoke divine grace for successful culmination of the pregnancy, prayer for a healthy and wise offspring who would carry forward the line of the family, spreading a positive energy in the environment so that the mother and the child, who is still in her womb, are free from worries and tensions, and in general creating a positive atmosphere for the future of the forthcoming child. In ancient times, this ritual was done to beget a son, but in the modern world it is done for a wise, intelligent and healthy child, whether the child is a son or a daughter.]

Verse no. 11:

सुरेन्द्रमात्राश्रितगर्भगौरवात्प्रयत्नमुक्तासनया गृहागतः।
तयोपचाराञ्जलिखिन्नहस्तया ननन्द पारिप्लवनेत्रया नृपः॥ ३-११

surendramātrāśritagarbhagauravātpayatnamuktāsanayā grhāgataḥ।
tayopacārāñjalikhinnahastayā nananda pāriplavanetrayā nṛpaḥ || 3-11

3-11. Whenever king Dilip went to visit the queen in her private chambers, he felt overjoyed when he saw signs of her advancing pregnancy as she bore a son who had the essence of all the eight Lokpals (deities who are deemed to be custodians of the different quarters of the world)¹ embedded in his genes. With the weight of such a mighty son lodged in her womb, the queen found it difficult to stand up from her seat instantly when the king arrived to meet her, for she had to struggle to get up with the weight of the embryo lying inside her abdomen. Nevertheless, she got up and joined the palms of her shaky hands as a gesture of showing respect to her husband and welcoming him. She was shy to look him directly in the eye, so her eyes flickered and looked sideways to avoid looking straight at the king.

The king, however, was filled with happiness when he observed these affectionate gestures and bashful movements of the queen.

[Note--¹The eight Lokpals are the eight deities who look after the eight quarters of the world--i.e. the north, the east, the north-east, the south, the south-east, the west, the south-west, and the north-west. Symbolically it means that the forthcoming son of king Dilip would be like these eight Lokpals as he would be responsible to take care of all the eight quarters of the earth as the guardian and emperor of the world.

This is a heavy responsibility that would fall on the shoulders of the forthcoming child, and since this was what destiny had wished, the gods and deities of the world ensured that the embryo naturally developed a strong frame, a robust personality, a healthy and muscular body, a sound wisdom and an intelligent mind. All these attributes are indicated by saying that the queen found it difficult to get up because of the weight of

the child in her womb. It was indeed a so-called 'weighty matter' for the mother to bear such a child in her womb.]

Verse no. 12:

कुमारभृत्याकुशलैरनुष्ठिते भिषग्भिराप्तैरथ गर्भभर्मणि

पतिः प्रतीतः प्रसवोन्मुखीं प्रियां ददर्श काले दिवमभितामिव॥ ३-१२

kumārabhr̥tyākuśalairanuṣṭhite bhiṣagbhirāptairatha garbhabharmaṇi|
patiḥ pratītaḥ prasavonmukhīm priyāṁ dadarśa kāle divamabhritāmiva || 3-12

3-12. The king had appointed expert gynaecologists and paediatricians to take proper care of the queen. When they informed the king that the queen's pregnancy had entered the tenth month and that a son was about to be born, the king, who was already very anxious and eager to see a son, became all the more so because the wait was getting stretched far too long.

The king's mental state was like that of a person who looks up eagerly at the rain-bearing clouds in the sky that still haven't showered rain on the parched land that had been suffering for want of rain for a long time through the summer. Just like the case of this person, who is eager to see the clouds showering rain, becoming fidgety, nervous and restless as time passes, so likewise the king also became fidgety, nervous and restless as days passed by and the son was yet to be born.

Verse no. 13:

ग्रहैस्ततः पञ्चभिरुच्चसंस्थितैरसूर्यगैः सूचितभाग्यसंपदम्

असूत पुत्रं समये शचीसमा त्रिसाधना शक्तिरिवार्थमक्षयम्॥ ३-१३

grahaistataḥ pañcabhiruccasaṁsthitairasūryagaiḥ sūcitabhāgyasaṁpadam ||
asūta putraṁ samaye śacīsamā trisādhanā śaktirivārthamakṣayam || 3-13

3-13. In the tenth month of her pregnancy, queen Sudakshina, who was like Indrani, the consort of Indra, the king of heaven¹, gave birth to a son who was blessed with all the auspicious signs of greatness. He was blessed with steady good fortune and luck, he was endowed with undiminished and immensity of wealth and prosperity, he had a radiance equivalent to that of the sun, and he possessed a high and exalted stature right from birth that would remain steady and unwavering through his life like the five stars that retain their brightness even after the sun has set². The son was naturally endowed with the majesty and influence characteristic of great kings, and was born in an environment of celebrations and festivities while Vedic hymns were being chanted with great enthusiasm, thereby inculcating in the child the natural instincts of grandeur, majesty and greatness that would be his hallmark when he grows up to become an adult.

[Note--¹Since king Dilip was an unchallenged ruler of earth like Indra was of heaven, the consort of the king, i.e. queen Sudakshina, is likened to Sachi, the consort of Indra.

²The five brightest stars in the night sky that shine even after the sun has set are the following--(i) Sirius (apparent magnitude -1.44), (ii) Canopus (apparent magnitude -0.62), (iii) Arcturus (apparent magnitude -0.05), (iv) Alpha Centauri (apparent magnitude -0.01), and (v) Vega (apparent magnitude -0.03).

On the other hand, if the planets which are bright and often referred to as 'grahas' in ancient astronomical and astrological calculations with respect to a child's birth, or as 'stars' in a common man's language, then they are the following--(i) Venus: the brightest planet, also called the 'morning star' or the 'evening star', (ii) Jupiter: a very bright and steady star which is the second or third brightest one, (iii) Mars: the red planet, its brightness varies, (iv) Saturn: a bright, yellowish star that is easily seen with a naked eye, and (v) Mercury: it is closest to the sun and appears low in the sky in the proximity to the setting or the rising sun.

From the viewpoint of ancient Indian astrology on which the birth-chart of a newly born child is based, it is believed that if one planet is in the ascendant at nativity it confers happiness, when there are two planets then they make him respected, three planets make the child almost equal to a ruler, four planets make the newly born infant a future king of the realm, and five planets make him quite like a divine being. Thus, Kalidas uses this metaphor to emphasise that the hero after whom his classical narrative is named 'Raghuvansham', i.e. a child, who would be eventually named 'Raghu', possessed all the auspicious signs of greatness and majesty that would entitle him to establish himself as a great king after whom an entire race of kings would be named as members of the Race of Raghu, i.e. Raghu-vansha, where the word 'vansha' refers to a race or family that descends from a particular individual and bears that person's name as its identity. That individual here is king Raghu.]

Verse no. 14:

दिशः प्रसेदुर्मरुतो ववुः सुखाः प्रदक्षिणार्चिर्विरग्निराददे।

बभूव सर्वं शुभशंसि तत्क्षणं भवो हि लोकाभ्युदयाय तादृशम्॥ ३-१४

diśaḥ prasedurmaruto vavuḥ sukhāḥ pradakṣiṇārcirhviragnirādade|

babhūva sarvaṁ śubhaśaṁsi tatkṣaṇaṁ bhavo hi lokābhyudayāya tādr̥śām || 3-14

3-14. At the time of the child's birth, all the directions were clean and clear (i.e. there was no fog, smoke or dirt in the atmosphere), a pleasant breeze blew, and the sacred fire representing the fire-god cheerfully accepted oblations from devotees doing circumambulation during the fire sacrifices.

In this way, all the signs were auspicious, and they symbolised a bright future where everything would be fine and in order. Verily indeed, these signs indicated that the birth of a great soul is a harbinger of, and it always ensures, happiness, auspiciousness, and all round welfare and well-being of the world.

Verse no. 15:

अरिष्टशय्यां परितो विसारिणा सुजन्मनस्तस्य निजेन तेजसा।
निशीथदीपाः सहसा हतत्विषो बभूवुरालेख्यसमर्पिता इव॥ ३-१५

ariṣṭaśayyāṁ parito visāriṇā sujanmanastasya nijena tejasā।
niśīthadīpāḥ sahasā hatatviṣo babhūvurālekhyasamarpitā iva || 3-15

3-15. The room where the child was born was lit up in all the corners with a natural brilliance that radiated out in the form of a glow from the new-born (like the natural luminescent glow effusing out of a glow-worm or a fire-fly), dulling the artificial light of the oil-lamps that were lit in the room to light it up. These oil-lamps lost their value and the importance of their shine, rendering them as just decorative pieces and as part of a picture painted to depict the scene of the maternity room, where the child was born, as witnessed during the night.

Verse no. 16:

जनाय शुद्धान्तचराय शंसते कुमारजन्मामृतसंमिताक्षरम्।
आदेयमासीत्त्रयमेव भूपतेः शशिप्रभं छत्रमुभे च चामरे॥ ३-१६

janāya śuddhāntacarāya śaṁsate kumārajanmāmṛtasammitākṣaram।
ādeyamāsīttṛayameva bhūpateḥ śaśiprabhaṁ chatramubhe ca cāmare || 3-16

3-16. For those royal attendants who brought forth the welcome news to king Dilip of the birth of a son with all auspicious signs of greatness, there was nothing that the king would not give them as a reward, except the three symbols of his kingship and royalty--viz. the ceremonial parasol over his throne, and the two fur whisks or fans that were waved before him when he sat on the kingdom's throne in the royal court. Other than these three symbols of his kingship and right to the throne of the kingdom, there was no other precious thing that the king did not liberally give as gifts to the heralds who brought the good news to him.

{To wit, king Dilip donated liberally and cheerfully everything that his attendants would be willing to have. He did not demur or hesitate in giving gifts to them, and even asked them if they wanted something more from him.}

[Note--King Dilip was by nature a very generous and magnanimous ruler. When the attendants brought him the welcome news that an auspicious son, an heir to the throne, was born, the king was so happy that he virtually opened the strings of his royal purse, giving donations cheerfully, liberally, and by the handfuls.

A similar description is narrated in Tulsidas' epic narration of the Ramayan in his book 'Ram Charit Manas', where we read that when king Dashrath was informed that four sons, who would be named Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan later on, were born, he

too donated liberally and cheerfully by the handfuls--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196.

Verse no. 17:

निवातपद्मस्तिमितेन चक्षुषा नृपस्य कान्तं पिबतः सुताननम्।
महोदधेः पूर इवेन्दुदर्शनाद्गुरुः प्रहर्षः प्रबभूव नात्मनि॥ ३-१७

nivātapadmastimitena cakṣuṣā nr̥pasya kāntaṁ pibataḥ sutānanam।
mahodadheḥ pūra ivendudarśanādguruḥ praharṣaḥ prababhūva nātmani || 3-17

3-17. The exhilarated king Dilip gazed steadily at the lovely face of his son, with the king's eyes riveted unblinkingly on the child's face like a lotus flower that stands still in a windless day. King Dilip's happiness knew no bounds and it heaved inside his bosom to uplift his spirits just as the sight of a full moon makes the ocean heave and swell during a full moon's night.

[Note--Here, the way king Dilip looked fixedly at his son's charming face is likened to a lotus flower that remains standing still on a windless day. Similarly, the king's joy and happiness that swelled in his bosom are likened to the ocean whose surface rises at the sight of a full moon, creating huge waves and high tide.

Though not expressly mentioned, the reference to the ocean rising at the sight of a full moon implies that the face of king Dilip's son too was like a full moon that created waves of joy and exhilaration within the bosom of the king when he gazed at his son's face.]

Verse no. 18:

स जातकर्मण्यखिले तपस्विना तपोवनादेत्य पुरोधसा कृते।
दिलीपसूनुर्मणिराकरोद्भवः प्रयुक्तसंस्कार इवाधिकं बभौ॥ ३-१८

sa jātakarmaṇyakhile tapasvinā tapovanādetya purodhasā kṛte।
dilīpasūnurmaṇirākaroḍbhavaḥ prayuktasaṁskāra ivādhikaṁ babhau || 3-18

3-18. King Dilip's son became all the more charming and attractive after the royal priest, sage Vashistha, came from his hermitage to perform all the required purifying rituals and associated ceremonies that are mandated by the scriptures for a new-born child. After the formalities were completed, the child looked as adorable and brilliant as a newly mined gem whose brilliance and beauty are enhanced manifold after it is cleaned and polished by an expert artisan or a jeweller.

[Note--A person who cleans, cuts, grinds and polishes a gemstone to give it its shine, brilliance and value is technically called 'a lapidarist', and the art itself is called 'lapidary'.

The newly born child is like a freshly mined gem that needs cleaning and polishing to bring out its natural grace, beauty and charm.]

Verse no. 19:

सुखश्रवा मङ्गलतूर्यनिस्वनाः प्रमोदनृत्यैः सह वारयोषिताम् ।
न केवलं सद्मनि मागधीपतेः पथि व्यजृम्भन्त दिवौकसामपि॥३-१९

sukhaśravā maṅgalatūryanisvanāḥ pramodanṛtyaiḥ saha vārayoṣitām |
na kevalaṁ sadmani māgadhīpateḥ pathi vyajṛmbhanta divaukasāmapī ||3-19

3-19. The sound of musical instruments of different varieties and the chorus of songs that were sung by royal courtesans echoed not only in all the corners of the palace of king Dilip, the husband of the daughter of the king of Magadh, i.e. queen Sudakshina (māgadhīpateḥ), but also reverberated in the heaven.

[Note--There were mass celebrations and festivities in the capital city. All sorts of musical instruments such as trumpets, clarinets, drums, flutes etc. were played by individuals as well as organised bands, and simultaneously dancers performed and sang in merry abundance.]

Verse no. 20:

न संयतस्तस्य बभूव रक्षितुर्विसर्जयेद्यं सुतजन्महर्षितः।
ऋणाभिधानात्स्वयमेव केवलं तदा पितॄणां मुमुचे स बन्धनात्॥ ३-२०

na saṁyatastasya babhūva rakṣiturvisarjayedyam sutajanmaharṣitaḥ |
ṛṇābhidhānātsvayameva kevalaṁ tadā pitṛṇāṁ mumuce sa bandhanāt || 3-20

3-20. King Dilip had such an exemplarily forgiving, compassionate and considerate nature that he had no prisoners whom he would have granted pardon and release them from prison to mark the birth of a prince. But nevertheless, now he got himself released from the obligation of honouring his filial responsibility of producing an off-spring who would carry forward the line and name of the family, and who would offer libations and oblations to the spirits of ancestors after the death of the king.

[Note--King Dilip had no prisoners also because there was no crime in his kingdom. Everyone obeyed rules and laws. In case someone committed an error and deviated from law, the king would admonish him and set him free with a commitment from the offender that he would mend his ways.]

Verse no. 21:

श्रुतस्य यायादयमन्तमर्भकः तथा परेषां युधि चेति पार्थिवः।
अवेक्ष्य धातोर्गमनार्थमर्थविच्चकार नाम्ना रघुमात्मसम्भवम्॥ ३-२१ ॥

śrutasya yāyādayamantamarbhakah tathā pareṣāṁ yudhi ceti pārthivah।
avekṣya dhātorgamanārthamarthaviccakāra nāmnā raghumātmāsambhavam ॥
3-21

3-21. King Dilip, who was an expert in linguistics and grammar as well as the different nuances of a word, named his son 'Raghu'¹ after deep thought to select a proper and fitting name for the child that would distinguish him from all others, with the hope that the child, when he grows up, would be forward looking and forward moving, become interested in acquiring knowledge as much as possible till he is well-versed in all the scriptures and their in-depth meaning, acquires martial skills till he reaches a stage where there is no warrior to compare with him, and he would go to extend his influence and sovereignty to the furthest corners of the earth by conquering enemies and overcoming obstacles.

{The king hoped that his son would not be satisfied by merely being a king, but he would strive to achieve great heights in every field--be it knowledge, good governance, martial skills, extension of his sovereignty over the earth till its farthest corners, creating an environment where he has no enemies, and in a general way establishing himself as an unparalleled legend that the world would remember fondly for all times to come. And king Dilip's wishes were fulfilled because his son Raghu was so great that he gave his name to the family to which he belonged, so much so that all the future kings and members of his family came to be known as 'Raghu-vanshis', or members of a race that descended from king Raghu. The feather in his cap was the fact that Lord Ram, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, was also born in this family, and the Lord was recognised as a 'Raghu-vanshi'.}

[Note--¹The root meaning of the word Raghu is 'going or moving, going or moving forward'. It implied that the bearer of the name 'Raghu' would be a person who would have a forward looking mentality, someone who would go forward with acquisition of knowledge and skills, a king who would move on in this world to attain greatness and fame by his character, knowledge, skills, behaviour and good governance as well as by acquisition of newer territories, subduing enemies and making peace with those who accept him as their sovereign, and so on and so forth. Raghu would transform from merely being a king of a kingdom called Ayodhya to an emperor whose sovereignty extended in all the directions of the earth.]

Verse no. 22:

पितुः प्रयत्नात्स समग्रसंपदः शुभैः शरीरावयवैर्दिने दिने।
पुपोष वृद्धिं हरिदश्वदीधितेरनुप्रवेशादिव बालचन्द्रमाः॥ ३-२२

pituḥ prayatnātsa samagrasaṁpadaḥ śubhaiḥ śarīrāvayavairdine dine|
pupoṣa vṛddhiṁ haridaśvadīdhiteranupraveśādiva bālacandramāḥ || 3-22

3-22. The boy had the brilliance and radiance of the sun, and under the assiduous care and love of his father, king Dilip, who had all the worldly treasures within his reach, the child grew up day-by-day as the moon develops from the first night after the new moon of the bright fortnight, till it reaches the zenith of its glory during the night of the full moon.

Verse no. 23:

उमावृषाङ्कौ शरजन्मना यथा यथा जयन्तेन शचीपुरन्दरौ|
तथा नृपः सा च सुतेन मागधी ननन्दतुस्तत्सदृशेन तत्समौ॥ ३-२३

umāvrṣāṅkau śarajanmanā yathā yathā jayantena śacīpurandarau|
tathā nṛpaḥ sā ca sutena māgadhī nanandatustatsadr̥śena tatsamau || 3-23

3-23. Just like the case of goddess Uma and Lord Shiva being pleased with their son Kartikeya, and Indra and his consort Sachi (also known as Indrani) were pleased with their son Jayant, so likewise king Dilip and his wife, queen Sudakshina, were very delighted and pleased with their son Raghu.

{To wit, just as Kartikeya delighted the heart of his parents, Lord Shiva and goddess Uma (also known as Parvati), and Jayant pleased the heart of his parents Indra and Sachi, so did the young prince Raghu pleased and gave delight to his parents, king Dilip and queen Sudakshina.}

Verse no. 24:

रथाङ्कनाम्नोरिव भावबन्धनं बभूव यत्प्रेम परस्पराश्रयम्|
विभक्तमप्येकसुतेन तत्तयोः परस्परस्योपरि पर्यचीयत॥ ३-२४

rathāṅkanāmnoriva bhāvabandhanam babhūva yatprema parasparāśrayam|
vibhaktamapyekasutena tattayoh̐ parasparasyopari paryacīyata || 3-24

3-24. The love and affection that the king and the queen had for each other were like the bond of love that the pair of birds called Chakva and Chakvi (i.e. a pair of male and female birds called ruddy goose or duck) share with each other. And although this love and affection between the royal couple was now shared by their young off-spring, prince Raghu, yet the intensity and depth of these emotions were not at all diminished, but on the contrary the couple grew closer to each other, with the prince acting as the cementing bond between them.

[Note--King Dilip and queen Sudakshina already loved each other even before Raghu was born, but this love grew more stronger, robust and intense after their son was born.

Raghu acted as a cementing bond that bound the king and the queen more firmly to each other. And since the doting parents shared their love equally with their son, the prince was fortunate because he had the privilege of enjoying equal love and affection from two sources, his father and his mother, thereby doubling the amount of love, attention and care that he got.

The chakva and chakvi birds (male and female ruddy goose or duck) form an inseparable pair who always stay together so much so that if one of the pair dies then the remaining partner would starve itself to death.]

Verse no. 25:

**उवाच धात्र्या प्रथमोदितं वचो ययौ तदीयामवलम्ब्य चाङ्गुलिम्।
अभूच्च नमः प्रणिपातशिक्षया पितुर्मुदं तेन ततान सोऽर्भकः॥ ३-२५**

uvāca dhātryā prathamoditaṁ vaco yayau tadīyāmavalambya cāṅgulim|
abhūcca namraḥ praṇipātaśikṣayā piturmudaṁ tena tatāna so'rbhakaḥ || 3-25

3-25. This young child started speaking words taught to him by his nurse, walked in a tottering manner by holding the fingers of the nurse, and became very polite as the nurse had taught him to bow respectfully before his elders. These and other small actions and deeds of the young Raghu multiplied the happiness of his father, king Dilip's heart (as he affectionately watched the boy grow up slowly).

Verse no. 26:

**तमङ्कमारोप्य शरीरयोगजैः सुखैर्निषिञ्चन्तमिवामृतं त्वचि।
उपान्तसंमीलितलोचनो नृपश्चिरात्सुतस्पर्शरसज्ञतां ययौ॥ ३-२६**

tamaṅkamāropya śarīrayogajaiḥ sukhairniṣiñcantamivāmṛtaṁ tvaci|
upāntasaṁmīlitalocano nṛpaścīrātsutasparśarasajñatāṁ yayau || 3-26

3-26. When the king lifted the young prince and made him sit on his lap, the mere touch of the prince's body filled the king with exhilaration, and he would become so overwhelmed with emotions that he would close his eyes and thoroughly enjoy those moments which seemed to him as if nectar (also known as Amrit) was raining down over him, a feeling for which he had been yearning for so long.

[Note--The king derived immense pleasure and satisfaction when the young Raghu sat on his lap and the king affectionately moved his hands over the child's body, caressing him lovingly. The king even closed his eyes to thoroughly enjoy those moments and concentrate on the feeling of contentedness that he felt by having a son sitting on his lap, marking the culmination of his wish to have a son, a desire that had he had been harbouring for a long time.]

Verse no. 27:

**अमंस्त चानेन परार्ध्यजन्मना स्थितेरभेत्ता स्थितिमन्तमन्वयम्।
स्वमूर्तिभेदेन गुणाग्र्यवर्तिना पतिः प्रजानामिव सर्गमात्मनः॥ ३-२७**

amaṁsta cānena parārdhyaajanmanā sthiterabhettā sthitimantamanvayam।
svamūrtibhedena guṇāgryavartinā patiḥ prajānāmiva sargamātmanah || 3-27

3-27. King Dilip--who had an exalted birth, who had always been careful about following rules, maintaining dignity and honour, living an auspicious life marked by righteousness, and who was well-versed in all the spheres of knowledge--saw in his son Raghu an image of himself with a bright future, a future that would be secure and stable, well looked after, and preserved and established firmly as a noble, honourable, righteous and auspicious family just like the creator Brahma regards his creation secure in the hands of Lord Vishnu, who is a manifestation of the Creator himself and represents the latter's glories with a special emphasis on the Creator's duties and responsibilities to protect, support and take care of his creation.

[Note--The Supreme Being wished to create a world that would be self-propagating and self-regulating till the time of its natural end. To give effect to his wishes and to initiate the process, he assumed the role of a Creator known as Brahma, who is therefore called the grandfather of creation. In order to govern this vast and multi-dimensional creation smoothly, there was the need for some sort of arrangement or establishment of a system where chiefs or governors were appointed to oversee the three broad area of governance or functioning of this creation--(i) someone who would first role forward the basic contours of the creation, and then establish a constitution and rules of law and governance by which the creation was to be governed, controlled and kept in check, (ii) someone to take care of the day-to-day functioning of the creation, to protect it, take care of it, support it whenever and wherever it was needed, and to maintain law and order, and (iii) someone to punish the guilty and bring to conclusion when the creation has completed its life-cycle or term, because, except the Cosmic Consciousness, nothing in this creation that has acquired a form, no matter how subtle, invisible, powerful and high it may be, is permanent, and therefore has to come to an end one day.

Towards this end, the Supreme Being established the 'Trinity of Gods' consisting of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. These three functionaries took charge of the three fundamental functions of the newly created world as outlined herein above. They were the chief, senior-most gods or governors who were respectively known as (i) Brahma who was assigned the first role, (ii) Vishnu who got the second role, and (iii) Shiva assumed the third role.

In this verse, king Dilip is compared to Brahma, and his son Raghu to Lord Vishnu. King Dilip had established himself as an exemplary ruler with noble characters and auspicious traits, and his style of governance too was matchless and immaculate in the world. What distinguished the king's style of governance is exemplified in verse no. 20 herein above which says that there were no prisoners in the king's rule simply and obviously because there was no crime that required to put someone in a prison. Dilip

wished that this tradition, which he had established with care, should be followed in the future by the family as well as the subjects of the kingdom. Hence, he is regarded as being equivalent to Brahma.

Raghu is compared to Lord Vishnu as the young prince would be as honourable as Lord Vishnu is, and would be responsible for protecting and taking care of the kingdom and honourable traditions established by his father, king Dilip, and carry forward his legacy just like Lord Vishnu is responsible to carry forward the legacy of good governance, ethics and morality in this creation as envisioned by the Supreme Being.]

Verse no. 28:

स वृत्तचूलश्चलकाकपक्षकैरमात्यपुत्रैः सवयोभिरन्वितः।

लिपेर्यथावद्ग्रहणेन वाङ्मयं नदीमुखेनेव समुद्रमाविशत्॥ ३-२८

sa vṛttacūlaścalakākapakṣakairamātyaputraiḥ savayobhiranvitaḥ।

liperyathāvadgrahaṇena vāṅmayam nadīmukheneva samudramāviśat || 3-28

3-28. After some time had passed since the child's first 'hair-cutting' or tonsuring ritual (known as chudakarma or mundan ceremony) was done¹, the young prince had grown locks of black curly hairs that dangled around his temples. He was then accompanied by the sons of his father's senior ministers to start the next phase of his life, the phase of education. He got acquainted with the alphabets and the basic structure of words, phrases and sentences, he started learning more about the art of speech and the finer nuances of language by delving deeper into this field of knowledge. This progression from learning the alphabets to becoming an expert in different fields of knowledge (such as grammar, language, oratory skills, different sciences, military art and craft, governance, diplomacy, justice, metaphysics, spiritualism, scriptures etc.) was like the case of a line of alligators entering the ocean one by one from the mouth of a river².

{This verse can be interpreted in the following way also: After the child's 'hair-cutting' ritual (known as chudakarma or mundan ceremony) was done (when the head is tonsured and a small tuft is left behind on the top of the head)¹, the young prince Raghu used to accompany the sons of his father's senior ministers, some of whom (the sons) had curly hairs dangling around their temples*, to study language and grammar. After the initial days when he got acquainted with the alphabets and the basic structure of words, phrases and sentences, he started learning more about the art of speech and the finer nuances of language by delving deeper into this field of knowledge. This progression was like the case of crocodiles entering the ocean one by one from the mouth of a river². }

[Note--¹The 'chudakarma' or the 'mundan' ceremony of a child in Hinduism is the first-haircut or tonsuring ritual of children symbolising spiritual cleansing, removal of impurities of the previous life, a fresh start in the present life. It is normally done between the first and the seventh years of birth, usually in the first, third, fifth or seventh year of birth. The child's hair on the head is shaved off by a barber while priests chant hymns. During this tonsuring process, a small bunch of hair is left on the top of the head to

symbolise purity of mind and well-being, as well as to remind the child that he has been cleaned of his past misdeeds and must be careful with himself in his present life so that at the end he finds deliverance, emancipation and salvation for himself as well as his soul.

This cutting of the hair which the infant brings with him in this world at the time of his when he leaves the mother's womb signifies that he is made to cast off the vestiges of his past life, while the little tuft which is left on his head is to remind him, when he grows up to become an adult, that he was made to shed the baggage of his previous life, and that he must chart a new path for himself in this birth. In a sense, this tuft acts as a reminder for a man that there was a time when he was born with a huge baggage of the consequences of the deeds he had done in his previous life, but it is all history now and he must start afresh and ensure that his future is secured by good and auspicious deeds and noble actions.

The tuft serves another function also. It acts like an antenna in a radio or other electronic devices that catch invisible signals carrying a message, and then relay them to the listener in an audible form so that they make sense to him. Likewise, the tuft on the head enables the person to connect with the divinity and employ the latter's energy for personal growth and spiritual development. This tuft sort of connects the individual with the cosmic Consciousness that enables the person to directly access the latter if he or she so wants. But then, as is the case with the radio device where the choice to listen or not is left to the listener, whether or not to connect with the cosmic Consciousness and benefit by this connection in the way of spiritual growth and development is obviously left to the individual concerned.

²The ocean is vast as compared to a river. The point where the river enters the ocean is known as the mouth of the river because it is at this point that the river pours out its water into the ocean. The crocodiles in the river enter into the ocean at this restricted point of the river, but once they are in the ocean they find themselves in a vast and virtually endless reservoir of water.

Likewise, in the initial stages, Raghu's knowledge was limited, but as time passed and he began to learn more, a vast body of knowledge unfolded before him as if a new vista of endless wisdom and erudition and possibilities presented themselves before him to be explored.

Here, the initial limited body of knowledge is likened to a river, the mouth of the river where it enters the ocean is like a vista through which the young prince would see the endless and fathomless body of knowledge that invited him to plunge and explore, and the body of knowledge itself is likened to the ocean--vast, endless and fathomless.

#The paradox with ancient Sanskrit literature is that often a single verse can be understood and interpreted in more than one way, as is the present case.

After the tonsuring of the head, it takes some months for new hairs to grow long enough to form locks of curly hairs that would dangle on the temples of a young boy. It is not possible overnight.

So therefore, since 'locks of black curled hairs dangling from the temples' is mentioned in this verse, there are obviously two possibilities--one, that there was some time gap of a few months between Raghu's tonsuring ritual and his beginning formal education in the company of sons of his father's ministers, and two, that if he started his

education immediately after this ritual then these curly hairs refer to his friends and co-students some of whom had such curls dangling from their temples.

As has been pointed out, the tonsuring ritual is held between the first and the seventh year of birth. So therefore, there is no fixed time frame for it to be done. Hence, some of the friends of Raghu had already undergone this hair-cutting ritual, while others had not. Therefore, some of these boys had long curly hairs dangling from their temples, while others had clean shaven heads with only a tuft left behind like prince Raghu had.]

Verse no. 29:

**अथोपनीतं विधिवद्विपश्चितो विनिन्युरेनं गुरवो गुरुप्रियम्।
अवन्ध्ययत्नाश्च बभूवुरत्र ते क्रिया हि वस्तूपहिता प्रसीदति॥ ३-२९**

athopanītaṁ vidhivadvipāścito vininyurenaṁ guravo gurupriyam।
avandhyayatnāśca babhūvuratra te kriyā hi vastūpahitā prasīdati || 3-29

3-29. When he (Raghu) began his education, his chief teacher (i.e. the learned sage Vashistha) performed his 'sacred thread ceremony' to initiate him as his disciple and student (in an investiture ceremony). Thereafter, under the guardianship of the senior-most sage (Vashistha) and other learned sages working under him, the young prince quickly picked up the threads of learning and became proficient in every field of knowledge being taught to him. This quality in the young prince (Raghu) gave great satisfaction to his teachers, as any teacher would be when his student is fast in learning and acquiring skills that are being taught. It is because it is always rewarding for a teacher to see his endeavours bear fruits when he finds that his student or disciple is an intelligent learner and does not frustrate the teacher's diligent efforts to impart education to him.

[Note--This 'sacred thread ceremony' is the second sacred ritual or a sacrament in a child's life that marks the threshold of his career when he enters into the phase of his adolescence, and later on into mature adulthood. It is done when he embarks on the next phase of life as a student to acquire knowledge under the care of an expert teacher.

Sage Vashistha had been a learned teacher, a head priest as well as a moral advisor and spiritual preacher for all the kings of this family since ancient times. In fact, this sage had also played the same role with respect to Lord Ram and his three brothers as is evident from the story of the Ramayana.

Prince Raghu's teachers knew very well that one day this young boy would become their king. So they were extra polite with him, taught him with extra care, and ensured that he acquires some specialised skills that are necessary for a king to rule a kingdom smoothly. Though the same teachers taught the sons of senior ministers, yet they made exception for Raghu and distinguished him by teaching him many things that they did not teach others. They were aware there must be some difference between a king and his ministers, so they tuned their syllabus accordingly. The teachers were also aware that when this boy becomes a king, then if he is pleased with them then surely he would be obliged towards them, and this in turn would mean honours and rewards and

privileges for such favourite teachers. So they took extra trouble for his all-round growth and education.]

Verse no. 30:

**धियः समग्रैः स गुणैरुदारधीः क्रमाच्चतस्रश्चतुरर्णवोपमाः।
ततार विद्याः पवनातिपातिभिर्दिशो हरिर्द्भिर्हरितामिवेश्वरः॥ ३-३०**

dhiyaḥ samagraiḥ sa guṇairudāradhīḥ kramāccatasraścaturarṇavopamāḥ|
tatāra vidyāḥ pavanātipātibhirdiśo haridbhīrharitāmiveśvaraḥ || 3-30

3-30. The highly intelligent prince Raghu was such a genius that he comprehensively employed all the faculties of his mind to easily and quickly, without the least trouble, acquire expertise in all the four spheres or arms of knowledge that are as vast as the four oceans, just like the sun speedily traverses over the four directions of the world astride his chariot that is driven by horses that are so fast that they drive the chariot faster than the wind.

[Note--Here, the ability of the prince's mind to gain knowledge is compared to the fast horses of the sun's chariot. Within a short span of twenty four hours, the sun travels from one point in the sky and returns to that point after travelling around in a circle through the vastness of the firmament with an untiring speed and punctuality. During this travel, the sun crosses four points in the sky--the east, the point directly overhead, the west, and the mid-point between the west and the east of the sky on the dark or the reverse side of the earth.

In contrast, the wind would blow at a fast pace for some distance and then lose its energy to calm down. There is a howling wind in one part of the earth, and complete silence in another part, showing that the wind's speed and energy are no match for those of the sun.

Prince Raghu picked up knowledge quickly and speedily as soon as he was introduced to a subject. His progress in education was unhindered like the progress of the sun in the sky that is not affected by any hurdle on earth.

The faculties of the mind are its ability to understand what is being taught, heard, seen or read, to learn and think, to logically analyse the various aspects of what is being taught and , to store knowledge for future recollection, and to intelligently apply this knowledge in practical life. Its functions also encompass applying wisdom and intelligence to distinguish between the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, and to do what is righteous and desist from that which is unrighteous.

Since knowledge itself has no limits and boundaries, and its treasure is vast and fathomless, it is therefore likened to the four great oceans. Besides its character of vastness, all the oceans are linked to each other, and actually they are one huge body of water that is assigned different names by men just for the sake of convenience. Similarly, knowledge has been divided into different branches for the sake of convenience and learning, but all are linked to one another in one way or the other. A versatile man is one who has knowledge of various fields. For example, there are people who are well-versed

in many languages, as well as in different fields of formal education--such people may have knowledge of different fields such humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, computer skills, music, theatre, art, and so on and so forth. The idea is that knowledge has no end.

Hence, with respect to prince Raghu it is said here that he quickly grasped whatever was taught to him, made rapid progress in learning, and soon became an expert in various fields of knowledge.

From the perspective of classical knowledge, the four broad fields of knowledge with their subsidiary branches that a king is expected to be an expert in are the following:

(a) (i) Shankhya Shastra of sage Kapil; (ii) Yoga Sutra (meditation) of Patanjali; and (iii) Nyaya Shastra (jurisprudence) of sage Gautam;

(b) knowledge of the four Vedas such Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva;

(c) (i) Vedic Astrology by Parashar, (ii) Shalihotra Sanshita (animal husbandry, livestock and veterinary science) by Shalihotra, and

(d) Artha Shastra (knowledge of trade, business and agriculture-based economic policies; military strategies, governance, law and court system, and statecraft that includes diplomacy with the use of its four tools called Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda) by Kautilya. Here, Sam = friendship and partnership; Daan = charities; Danda = punishment; and Bheda = creating dissension by using the secret tool of spying.]

Verse no. 31:

**त्वचं च मेध्यां परिधाय रौरवीमशिक्षतास्त्रं पितुरेव मन्त्रवत्
न केवलं तद्गुरुरेकपार्थिवः क्षितावभूदेकधनुर्धरोऽपि सः॥ ३-३१**

tvacaṁ ca medhyāṁ paridhāya rauravīmaśikṣatāstraṁ pitureva mantravat ||
na kevalaṁ tadgururekapārthivaḥ kṣitāvabhūdekadhanurdharo'pi saḥ || 3-31

3-31. Prince Raghu wrapped himself in the hide of a black buck (like a student who is learning martial arts and skills of warfare using a bow-and-arrow from a sage who is a master of such arts) to learn the art of archery (skilful aiming and shooting different types of arrows and missiles) as well as the relevant Mantras (manoeuvres, strategies and skills) needed to successfully use his weapons.

In this aspect, his father, king Dilip, became his teacher and guru, because Dilip was not only an unquestioned emperor of the four directions of the world (known as a Chakravarti king), but was also one who was an expert archer and knew how to use his bow to bring out its best potentials.

[Note--King Dilip trained his son personally in the practical arts and skills of warfare using arrows and bows, the standard weapons of that era. Although prince Raghu must have been taught in this field by his teachers, but it must be understood that it was more in the form of a theoretical knowledge and less as a practical knowledge. This gap was filled by his father king Dilip who had extensive practical experience of the use of the bow and arrow in the real-time scenario of a battle-field, a knowledge which obviously

cannot be imparted merely by learning theory taught in class-rooms in a peaceful environment.

This first-hand training in the use of weapons, especially the bow-and-arrow, by his father, who himself was an unmatched warrior and an expert in this field, would stand in good stead for the young prince Raghu, and enable him to stand tall in the battle-fields later on in his life. An evidence of this would appear a while later when we read that even Indra, the god of heaven, suffered humiliation at the hands of Raghu and could not defeat him in a battle--refer verse nos. 51-63.]

Verse no. 32:

महोक्षतां वत्सतरः स्पृशन्निव दिवपेन्द्रभावं कलभः श्रयन्निव
रघुः क्रमाद्यौवनभिन्नशैशवः पुपोष गाम्भीर्यमनोहरं वपुः॥ ३-३२

mahokṣatām vatsatarah sprśanniva dvipendrabhāvaṁ kalabhaḥ śrayanniva ||
raghuḥ kramādyauvanabhinnaśaiśavaḥ pupoṣa gāmbhīryamanoharaṁ vapuḥ ||
3-32

3-32. Just like a young calf gradually grows and attains a muscular body of a fully grown bull, and the calf of an elephant transforming over time into an adult elephant, so did the young boy, prince Raghu, gradually shed his delicate frame of a child as he entered his teens. During this transition, the youthful Raghu's body developed a muscular physique, and he became more handsome, attractive and charming.

Verse no. 33:

अथास्य गोदानविधेरनन्तरं विवाहदीक्षां निरवर्तयद्गुरुः।
नरेन्द्रकन्यास्तमवाप्य सत्पतिं तमोनुदं दक्षसुता इवाबभुः॥ ३-३३

athāsyā godānavidheranantaraṁ vivāhadīkṣāṁ niravartayadguruḥ |
narendrakanyāstamavāpya satpatiṁ tamonudaṁ dakṣasutā ivābabhuḥ || 3-33

3-33. When prince Raghu attained adulthood, his father performed the third sacrament of having his hair trimmed once again¹. Then the king got him married. The princess who married prince Raghu deemed herself as lucky as Rohini, the daughter of Daksha-Prajapati who got married to the Moon-God, because prince Raghu's radiance and glory was enough to remove gloom and darkness in the lives of everyone around, including the princess who was now his wife.

[Note--¹This is different from tonsuring. In this ritual, the barber only cuts the hair short. It marks the end of the boy's period of celibacy and the learning phase of his life, called the Brahmacharya Ashram, and his entering into the second phase of life called the Grihastya Ashram. After the first sacrament of tonsuring the head, the second sacrament of the sacred thread ritual, this is the third important sacrament.

The Brahmacharya Ashram is the first of the four phases in a person's life. It refers to celibacy when the boy devotes his time and energy to education.

The Grihastya Ashram is the householder phase when a boy marries and starts a family.

Just like the tonsuring of the head prior to the first phase of Brahmacharya Ashram indicates that the child is made to shed off the vestiges of his previous life and he should now identify himself with his new life, the second trimming of the hair indicates that now he has become an adult when he has to chalk out a new path for himself to establish his own identity as well as that of his forthcoming family.]

Verse no. 34:

युवा युगव्यायतबाहुरंसलः कवाटवक्षाः परिणद्धकंधरः।

वपुःप्रकर्षादजयद्गुरुं रघुस्तथापि नीचैर्विनयाददृश्यत॥ ३-३४

yuvā yugavyāyatabāhuraṁsalaḥ kavāṭavakṣāḥ pariṇaddhakāṁdharāḥ |
vapuḥprakarṣādajayadgurum raghustathāpi nīcāirvinayādadṛśyata || 3-34

3-34. The youthful prince Raghu had a magnificent physique that had arms as long as the yoke and its attached frame¹, a chest as broad as the frame of a wide door, and a thickset neck with its accompanying broad and muscular shoulders.

This charming personality of the prince won the heart of his father, king Dilip. But inspite of having an elegant personality and an excellent pedigree that literally humbled everyone else in comparison, the prince himself was very modest, polite and humble, never showing-off and boasting about anything; he had no ego, arrogance or haughtiness in his character.

[Note--¹The yoke is a long wooden crosspiece frame fastened over the neck of two bullocks and used to either pull a bullock cart or tied to a plough for farming purposes. It also refers to a long pole or bar, usually made of bamboo, to which two pots or baskets are hung at its two ends, and then this frame is put over the shoulders of a bearer to carry the contents of the pot or the basket from one point to another.

The comparison is apt because the arms of a man also are placed on either sides of the neck and the shoulders like the yoke that is put on the neck and shoulders of either the bullocks or the man as described above.

Since the yoke and its frame are heavy, it is but natural that the neck and the shoulders of anyone or any animal who bears it will be strong, muscular and well-built so as to be able to carry the weight. Hence, this metaphor perfectly fits in with prince Raghu who had a broad chest, and muscular neck and shoulders so that he can properly bear his long, yoke-like arms and fruitfully use them.]

Verse no. 35:

ततः प्रजानां चिरमात्मना धृतां नितान्तगुर्वी लघयिष्यता धुरम्।
निसर्गसंस्कारविनीत इत्यसौ नृपेण चक्रे युवराजशब्दभाक्॥ ३-३५

tataḥ prajānām cira-mātmanā dhṛtām nitāntagurvīm laghayiṣyatā dhuram ||
nisargasamśkāraviniṭa ityasau nṛpeṇa cakre yuvarājaśabdabhāk || 3-35

3-35. Then king Dilip thought over the matter and desired to relieve himself from carrying the burden of administering a vast kingdom that he had successfully borne for a long time. With this wish in his mind, and being fully satisfied by his son's abilities to successfully carry this responsibility, as well as by his excellent character and natural qualities of being polite and humble along with his expertise in all fields of knowledge, the king anointed his son Raghu as the crown prince and the heir-apparent, who would, in due course of time, become the next king and inherit the throne of the kingdom.

[Note--After judging prince Raghu and finding him competent in all respects, king Dilip decided that the time had come to pass on the baton to the next generation represented by the prince. So the wise king appointed his son, prince Raghu, as the heir-apparent and left the daily affairs of administration to him, while keeping an eye on everything from the sidelines so as to ensure that the prince gets a hand-on experience of every aspect of kingship while his father is there to advise and guide him on all matters where the young prince needs one, and at the same time to ensure that Raghu does not commit an error and smoothly handles the burden of taking care of the kingdom that he would ultimately have to bear after his father's death.]

Verse no. 36:

नरेन्द्रमूलायतनादनन्तरं तदास्पदं श्रीर्युवराजसंज्ञितम्।
अगच्छदंशेन गुणाभिलाषिणी नवावतारं कमलादिवोत्पलम्॥ ३-३६

narendramūlāyatanādanantaram tadāspadam śrīryuvarājasamjñitam|
agacchadamśena guṇābhilāṣiṇī navāvatāram kamalādivotpalam || 3-36

3-36. The 'Rajlaxmi', the symbolic deity representing the powers, wealth, fortunes and privileges associated with the kingship of a great kingdom, who earlier had been close to king Dilip and had always blessed him, now found a new young and youthful patron in crown prince Raghu, and so she joined him with enthusiasm. It was like the case of an old lotus flower transferring its glories to a new lotus flower of the next generation, and feeling glad to see the new lotus flower bloom and thrive.

[Note--Like the old lotus flower gets joy when it finds that the new lotus flower that has bloomed nearby has acquired the same beauty and charm as the parent flower, both king Dilip and the Rajlaxmi were very glad to see the young crown prince inherit the glorious virtues, the qualities and the competence to rule a vast kingdom from his father in entirety. The Rajlaxmi, therefore, had no second thoughts or reservations as she got

associated with the prince, while king Dilip felt contented that his son has lived up to the expectations of his father, and would fulfil his obligations in a dignified and responsible manner.]

Verse no. 37:

**विभावसुः सारथिनेव वायुना घनव्यपायेन गभस्थिमानिव।
बभूव तेनातितरां सुदुःसहः कटप्रभेदेन करीव पार्थिवः॥ ३-३७**

vibhāvasuḥ sārathineva vāyunā ghanavyapāyena gabhasthimāniva|
babhūva tenātitarāṁ suduḥsahaḥ kaṭaprabhedena karīva pārthivaḥ || 3-37

3-37. Like the fire that feels emboldened when it has the wind in its favour (because with a favourable wind the fire can spread rapidly and has no fear of getting suffocated), the sun that shines with confidence in the clean sky of winter (without the fear of clouds obscuring its light), and a male elephant that feels energetic and enthusiastic when its temples begin to exude the sticky secretion called the rut (because an elephant in the mating season becomes very bold when rut oozes out of the glands around its temples)--king Dilip too became very confident of his future, and felt himself invincible, unassailable and invulnerable after his able and competent son, crown prince Raghu, took over the reigns of the kingdom.

Verse no. 38:

**नियुज्य तं होमतुरंगरक्षणे धनुर्धरं राजसुतैरनुद्रुतम्।
अपूर्णमेकेन शतक्रतूपमः शतं क्रतूनामपविघ्नमाप सः॥ ३-३८**

niyuja taṁ homaturāṅgarakṣaṇe dhanurdharaṁ rājasutairanudrutam|
apūrṇamekena śatakratūpamaḥ śataṁ kratūnāmapavighnamāpa saḥ || 3-38

3-38. {King Dilip then embarked on an ambitious mission to do a hundred horse sacrifices that would entitle him to attain a stature on earth that would be equivalent to that of Indra as the king of heaven, though of course the king had no intention to usurp the throne of heaven and push Indra aside, as his aim was limited to establishing himself as an unchallenged and indisputable emperor of the earth.}

King Dilip, who had a virtual parity with Indra, the king of heaven, wanted however to put a formal stamp of approval to his exalted stature amongst the rulers of the earth by performing a hundred Ashamedha Yagyas (horse sacrifices) successfully.

With this wish, he appointed his son, the crown prince Raghu, and sons of his ministers and princes of other subordinate kings who were under his overall sovereignty, as escorts and protectors of the horse that was released after the completion of formalities of the horse sacrifice.

In this way, the king was successful in completing ninety-nine horse sacrifices.

[Note--In ancient times, it was a standard practice for great rulers to do horse sacrifices to assert their authority over far-flung areas of their own kingdoms, as well as to extend the boundaries of their present influence by subduing opponents and rulers of other places who opposed the patron performing the horse sacrifice and refused to surrender. Such opponents would usually hold the horse and refused its progress over the land they ruled. In this situation, a battle followed. Mostly the army of the king who had released the horse won, and this meant that the opponent was automatically conquered and his land brought under the rule and sovereignty of the principle king on whose behalf the horse was released. Since this sacrifice was given the veil of a religious exercise, so mostly all other kings yielded without resistance. Hence, this was used as a clever device by ancient rulers to extend their realm with the least opposition.

Again, since performing the horse sacrifice entailed huge expenditure and the need for extensive preparation and large-scale logistics, only big and prosperous kings could even imagine to do it.]

Verse no. 39:

ततः परं तेन मखाय यज्वना तुरंगमुत्सृष्टमनर्गलं पुनः।
धनुर्भृतामग्रत एव रक्षिणां जहार शक्रः किल गूढविग्रहः॥ ३-३९

tataḥ paraṁ tena makhāya yajvanā turaṅgamutsṛṣṭamanargalaṁ punaḥ।
dhanurbhṛtāmagrata eva rakṣiṇāṁ jahāra śakraḥ kila gūḍhavigrahaḥ || 3-39

3-39. Finally, when the horse was released by king Dilip for the hundredth time in order to complete his wish to do a hundred horse sacrifices, Indra, who had become jealous and sceptical of the king's intentions by this time¹, stole the horse surreptitiously inspite of it being protected by the able archer prince Raghu himself, as well as other warriors who were equally competent to protect the horse.

[Note--¹Indra had become jealous of king Dilip because it was extremely rare for someone to continuously and successfully do hundred horse sacrifices one after another. Besides this, Indra feared that when all the hundred sacrifices would be complete, king Dilip would automatically and by default acquire the right to the throne of heaven, and if he so desired he could compel Indra to vacate the post of the 'king of heaven'. King Dilip had no such intention though, yet Indra, driven by greed, suspicion and jealousy, did not want to take the risk, and so he decided to disrupt the last round of the horse sacrifices by stealing the horse.

This selfish and evil nature of Indra has been endorsed by sage Valmiki in his famous epic 'Ramayana' in its Baal Kand, Sarga 14, where it is mentioned that "Indra is supposed to be the only one who has performed a hundred sacrifices, as no one else is able to carry them through successfully. Indra is very jealous on this point since he who performs hundred sacrifices will get into his place - the throne of heaven, and thereby become entitled to be called an 'Indra'." This means that the word 'Indra' is not a name but a title of the ruler of heaven.]

Verse no. 40:

विषादलुप्तप्रतिपत्ति विस्मितं कुमारसैन्यं सपदि स्थितं च तत्।
वसिष्ठधेनुश्च यदृच्छयागता श्रुतप्रभावा ददृशेऽथ नन्दिनी॥ ३-४०

viṣādaluptapratipatti vismitaṁ kumārasainyaṁ sapadi sthitaṁ ca tat।
vasiṣṭhadhenuśca yadṛicchayāgatā śrutaprabhāvā dadṛśe'tha nandinī || 3-40

3-40. When prince Raghu and his army observed that the horse supposed to be protected by them has suddenly vanished from sight (as Indra had used his magical godly powers to secretly take the horse away without anyone being able to notice it), they were all dumbfounded, standing motionless and not knowing what to do next.

Just at that confounding moment, as destiny had designed the things to happen, the holy cow Nandini of sage Vashistha, about whose great mystical powers and potentials the prince and his companions had already heard of, came there voluntarily (as if she had a premonition of the trouble that Raghu would face in his effort to help his father complete the cycle of a hundred horse sacrifices).

[Note--Nandini, as we have read earlier, was not an ordinary cow, but a cow that had divinity personified in her physical form. She had magical powers and mystical abilities. Her potentials were well-known to prince Raghu as his father had informed him about the background of his birth.

Now, sine Dilip had been blessed by Nandini, and his son Raghu was the result of Nandini's blessings, it naturally followed that both the king as well as the prince had a protective umbrella of Nandini's blessings over their heads by default. So therefore, when the holy cow realised that Indra was playing dirty tricks on those who are protected by her blessings, she instinctively decided to intervene and help them. It is for this reason that she came to the spot where Raghu and his army stood dazed when the horse suddenly vanished from sight.]

Verse no. 41:

तदङ्गनिष्यन्दनजलेन लोचने प्रमृज्य पुण्येन पुरस्कृतः सताम्।
अतीन्द्रियेष्वप्युपपन्नदर्शनो बभूव भावेषु दिलीपनन्दनः॥ ३-४१

tadaṅganiṣyandanajalena locane pramṛjya puṇyena puraskṛtaḥ satām।
atīndriyeṣvapyupapannadarśano babhūva bhāveṣu dilīpanandanaḥ || 3-41

3-41. {When prince Raghu saw her coming, he suddenly remembered about her mystical abilities and supernatural powers of which he had heard a lot from his father, king Dilip. So therefore, Raghu decided to seek her help to locate the horse.}

When prince Raghu, who was admired by noble persons, saw the holy cow Nandini arrive at the spot, he recollected what his father, king Raghu, had already told him about her mystical powers and potentials. So therefore, at a subtle hint from her, Raghu applied a little of her urine on the lids of his closed eyes to enable him to see beyond the realm of the visible world. Now he could see even invisible things that weren't visible to an ordinary eye.

Verse no. 42:

स पूर्वतः पर्वतपक्षशातनं ददर्श देवं नरदेवसंभवः।

पुनः पुनः सूतनिषिद्धचापलं हरन्तमश्वं रथरश्मिसंयुतम्॥ ३-४२

sa pūrvataḥ parvatapakṣaśātanam dadarśa devaṁ naradevasambhavaḥ |
punaḥ punaḥ sūtanisiddhacāpalam harantamaśvam ratharaśmisamyutam
|| 3-42

3-42. No sooner did prince Raghu apply the cow's urine to his eyes, than what he saw shocked and astonished him. He could see Indra forcibly taking away the restless horse in the eastern direction. The horse was tied by a rope to the back of Indra's chariot from which it tried to break free, even as Indra's charioteer named Matali tried his best to calm the horse down.

What surprised Raghu was that Indra, who was so powerful that he had the ability to slice-off the wings (sides) of huge mountains by a single strike of his Vajra, the thunderbolt, would be so coward as to steal a horse surreptitiously. {If he indeed wanted to take the horse away manly like a true warrior, he could have easily challenged the prince for a duel and gain access to the horse after defeating him. This thought itself filled Raghu with contempt for Indra, and he decided instantly to challenge the thief and retrieve the horse.}

Verse no. 43:

शतैस्तमक्षणामनिमेषवृत्तिभिर्हरिं विदित्वा हरिभिश्च वाजिभिः।

अवोचदेनं गगनस्पृशा रघुः स्वरेण धीरेण निवर्तयन्निव॥ ३-४३

śataistamakṣṇāmanimeṣavṛttibhirharim veditvā haribhiśca vājibhiḥ |
avocadenam gaganasprśā raghuḥ svareṇa dhīreṇa nivartayanniva || 3-43

3-43. {How did Raghu recognise that the thief was none other but Indra? The answer is given in this verse.}

When prince Raghu saw that the stealer of the horse had a thousand eyes¹ and rode a chariot driven by green coloured horses, he immediately concluded that he was none other but Indra. And so Raghu boldly and fearlessly, in a thunderous voice that reverberated in the sky, called out to Indra to ask him to return the horse.

[Note--¹Indra is said to have a 'thousand eyes' because he has countless holes or spots on his body, resembling chicken-pox, that were created by a curse cast upon him by sage Gautam when Indra cheated the sage's chaste wife called Ahilya. The sage also cursed his wife to become a stone. But when the sage found out the reality that the main culprit was Indra and not his wife, he blessed her that in Treta Yoga, when Lord Vishnu would manifest himself as Lord Ram, the latter would touch her stony form with his holy feet, and then she would regain her original form. Ahilya's redemption has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210-to Doha no. 211.]

Verse no. 44:

**मखांशभाजां प्रथमो मनीषिभिस्त्वमेव देवेन्द्र सदा निगद्यसे।
अजसदीक्षाप्रयतस्य मदगुरोः क्रियाविघाताय कथं प्रवर्तसे॥ ३-४४**

makhāṁśabhājāṁ prathamō maṇīṣibhistvameva devendra sadā nigadyase|
ajasradīkṣāprayatasya madguroḥ kriyāvighātāya katham pravartase || 3-44

3-44. Prince Raghu said loudly, at the top of his voice: "Oh king of gods (devendra)! Scholars have said that you are the chief amongst the gods who are offered offerings that are made to the sacred fire during sacrifices by the virtue of you being the chief amongst gods and also the king of heaven. This being so, why are you trying yourself to create hurdles in the completion of the horse sacrifice that my father has started by properly following the rules and regulations needed to be observed for a religiously sanctioned exercise?

{Oh Indra, the king of gods! You ought to protect such exercises, and not obstruct or defile them. Its incredulous and unbelievable that one who is supposed to oversee and protect a ritual such as a horse sacrifice would obstruct or defile it himself, or create a hindrance in its successful completion. You are the one who is given the first offering during such ceremonies, and so it is incomprehensible that it is 'you' who has stolen the horse which is pivotal to the success of the ongoing sacrifice. So, please return it to me so that I can fulfil my own obligation to my father who has assigned me the duty to protect the horse.}

Verse no. 45:

**त्रिलोकनाथेन सदा मखदिविषस्त्वया नियम्या ननु दिव्यचक्षुषा।
स चेत्स्वयं कर्मसु धर्मचारिणां त्वमन्तरायो भवसि च्युतो विधिः॥ ३-४५**

trilokanāthena sadā makhadiviṣastvayā niyamyā nanu divyacakṣuṣā|
sa cetsvayaṁ karmasu dharmacāriṇāṁ tvamantarāyo bhavasi cyuto vidhiḥ
|| 3-45

3-45. By the virtue of you being the senior-most god and the king of all the three divisions of the world (heaven, earth and nether world: *trilokanāthena*), someone who has the supernatural power to see beyond the mundane and the ordinary (*divyacakṣuṣā*), you are expected to see the dangers that are about to interrupt the ritual of a sacrifice so as to take pre-emptive protective action. You are expected to not only extend support for sacrifices, but also to punish those who try to defile such rituals or create mischief during their progress.

This being the truth of the matter and as the present case stands, if you present yourself as an obstacle to create a hindrance to such sacrificial rituals and ceremonies, although you are supposed to aid such exercises and prevent their disruption, then surely religious merit of the institution of holy activities would suffer an irreparable damage.

Verse no. 46:

तदङ्गमग्र्यम् मघवन्महाक्रतोरमुं तुरङ्गं प्रतिमोक्तुमर्हसि।
पथः श्रुतेर्दर्शयितार ईश्वरा मलीमसामददते न पद्धतिम्॥ ३-४६

tadaṅgamagryam maghavanmahākratoramūṁ turāṅgaṁ pratimoktumarhasi।
pathaḥ śruterdarśayitāra īśvarā malīmasāmadadate na paddhatim || 3-46

3-46. Therefore, oh Indra, please release this horse that is pivotal to the completion of the horse sacrifice, because those who are senior and are expected to show others the correct path and proper behaviour, ought not to do something themselves that is outright evil and unrighteous or fall under the definition of an improper behaviour."

[Note--Prince Raghu had boldly rebuked Indra and criticised his conduct. Perhaps it was the first time in his life that Indra had faced such a stern and fearless rebuke. Surely he must have frozen for a moment at the temerity of Raghu to challenge him and his actions so bravely. Nevertheless, privately Indra appreciated this noble character of the young prince that he could openly challenge the wrong-doer no matter who or how powerful the latter was. But such admonishing rubbed Indra's ego the wrong way, and so he refused to part with the horse unless Raghu defeated him in a duel, as will be clear in the following verses.]

Verse no. 47:

इति प्रगल्भं रघुणा समीरितं वचो निशम्याधिपतिर्दिवौकसाम्।
निवर्तयामास रथं सविस्मयः प्रचक्रमे च प्रतिवक्तुमुत्तरम्॥ ३-४७

iti pragalbhaṁ raghuṇā samīritaṁ vaco niśamyādhipatirdivaukasām।
nivartayāmāsa ratham savismayaḥ pracakrame ca prativaktumuttaram || 3-47

3-47. Upon hearing the brave and determined words of prince Raghu (wherein he had candidly reproached Indra for his evil deed and unrighteous ways), Indra was amazed and taken aback. He stopped his chariot, turned around, and replied to the prince as follows--

Verse no. 48:

**यदात्थ राजन्यकुमार तत्तथा यशस्तु रक्ष्यं परतो यशोधनैः।
जगत्प्रकाशं तदशेषमिज्यया भवद्गुरुर्लङ्घयितुं ममोद्यतः॥ ३-४८**

yadāttha rājanyakumāra tattathā yaśastu rakṣyaṁ parato yaśodhanaiḥ |
jagatprakāśaṁ tadaśeṣamijyayā bhavadgururlaṅghayitum mamodyataḥ || 3-48

3-48. Indra said to prince Raghu: "Oh Prince! What you have said is true and worthy of you. But the irony is that those like me who have their exalted stature, their high seat and its title with its associated prestige as their only honour, asset and wealth (which in my case is the title of Indra, the ruler of heaven and the king of gods), then such persons are obliged to protect their stature, title and honour at all costs when a competitor seems to be ready to unseat them from their high seat and its associated honours (like the present case where king Dilip is a competitor who is poised to challenge Indra's his high seat of kingdom of heaven if he successfully manages to complete a hundred horse sacrifices which only Indra had done till date).

My renown and high stature as Indra, a title that implies that I am a ruler of this world and a king of heaven, is famous and well-established in all the parts of the world, and your father is just a step away from unseating me from this high stature of mine, and may claim his right to the throne of heaven by default if he succeeds in completing the hundred horse sacrifices.

{Let me be frank--how can I allow this to happen? I have no personal grudge against your honourable father, but his success would mean I will be pushed out, dethroned and deprived of all my privileges and honours as Indra. And in case he lets me retain my position as 'Indra', then obviously I will have to remain obliged to him forever, and morally feel demoted even if I am allowed to retain my crown of heaven by your father's grace. This situation no honourable ruler would like to happen. And as a king must employ all tricks in the trade to retain his status and crown, I am within my rights to prevent the success of the horse sacrifice by adopting a method that though is wrong but would well serve my objective.}

Verse no. 49:

**हरिर्यथैकः पुरुषोत्तमः स्मृतो महेश्वरस्त्र्यम्बक एव नापरः।
तथा विदुर्मा मुनयः शतक्रतुं द्वितीयगामी न हि शब्द एष नः॥ ३-४९**

hariryathaikaḥ puruṣottamaḥ smṛto maheśvarastryambaka eva nāparaḥ |
tathā vidurmāṁ munayaḥ śatakratum dvitīyagāmī na hi śabda eṣa naḥ || 3-49

3-49. Just like the case of Lord Vishnu being called 'Purshottam' (meaning the best amongst all living beings in this creation; literally referring to all 'men' as the word 'Purush' means a male member of the society), and Lord Shiva is renowned as 'Maheswar' and 'Trayambak' (meaning respectively a Great God or one who is superior to all other the gods, and one who has three eyes, two conventional eyes and the third that is located in the centre of Lord Shiva's forehead)--likewise my name 'Shatkratu'¹ (which is another name of Indra) is popular with great sages, and it has a unique identity as no other living entity is entitled to assume this name.

No other living being is entitled to acquire or assume any of these three titles that are exclusive for us.

{It is apparent that if your father completes hundred horse sacrifices, then he will automatically be called Shatkratu, something that is completely unacceptable. It would go against standard norms and well established traditions, and its violation is not excusable. The fault lies with your honourable father as he should have thought of this angle before embarking on this audacious endeavour. Had he been wise, the present stand-off would not have occurred at all.}

[Note--¹The word 'Shatkratu' refers to one who has successfully performed a hundred sacrifices, usually referring to the Aswamedha Yagya, or the horse sacrifice. It is an epithet used for Indra. The word also means one who has a hundred times more power and insight into affairs than others have. The prefix 'shata' means a hundred, and the suffix 'kratu' means to do, a doer in Puranic interpretation, as well as to acquire power that is hundred times more than others in ancient Rig Vedic interpretation.]

Verse no. 50:

अतोऽयमश्वः कपिलानुकारिणा पितुस्त्वदीयस्य मयापहारितः।

अलं प्रयत्नेन तवात्र मा निधाः पदं पदव्यां सगरस्य संततेः॥ ३-५०

ato'yamaśvaḥ kapilānukāriṇā pitustvadīyasya mayāpahāritaḥ।

alaṁ prayatnena tavātra mā nidhāḥ padaṁ padavyāṁ sagarasya saṁtateḥ || 3-50

3-50. Therefore I had to appropriate the horse of your father to prevent violation of established age-old traditions (as narrated in verse no. 49 herein above). I advise you not to follow the example of the sons of king Sagar who had been reduced to ashes by sage Kapil when they tried to recover the horse of their father when he too had tried to do a hundred horse sacrifice when I had to intervene to stop him from doing so. Hence, your attempt to recover the horse of your father would go in vain, and I advise you in good faith to go back (if you don't wish to meet the same fate as the sons of king Sagar).

[Note--The Puranic story goes that one of the ancestors of king Dilip was king Sagar. He too had tried to do a hundred horse sacrifice when Indra stole the horse and hid it in the hermitage of sage Kapil. Sagar's 60,000 sons dug up the whole earth to find the horse, and ultimately located it in the sage's hermitage. The sage's meditation was disturbed by

the sons of Sagar, and so the angry cursed the sons to immediately burn to ashes. Later on Bhagirath, the great grandson of Sagar, brought the holy river Ganges to the spot where their ashes lay so that Sagar's sons could find liberation and deliverance from the curse and go to heaven.

This episode has been narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Chapter 38-40.]

Verse no. 51:

ततः प्रहास्यापभयः पुरन्दरं पुनर्बभाषे तुरगस्य रक्षिता।

गृहाण शस्त्रं यदि सर्ग एष ते न खल्वनिर्जित्य रघुं कृती भवान्॥ ३-५१

tataḥ prahāsyāpabhayaḥ purandaram punarbabhāṣe turagasya rakṣitā |
grhāṇa śastraṁ yadi sarga eṣa te na khalvanirjitya raghuṁ kṛtī bhavān || 3-51

3-51. Then prince Raghu, who was assigned the job of protecting the horse, laughed at Indra and challenged him fearlessly as follows: "If that is your resolve not to return the horse, then pick up your arms. You cannot succeed in taking away the horse without defeating me in a duel."

{Such was the confidence of Raghu! He was determined to teach Indra, who had done an evil deed by 'stealing' a horse of a sacrifice inspite of his being a 'god', a lesson he would never forget.}

Verse no. 52:

स एवमुक्त्वा मघवन्तमुन्मुखः करिष्यमाणः सशरं शरासनम्।

अतिष्ठदालीढविशेषशोभिना वपुःप्रकर्षेण विडम्बितेश्वरः॥ ३-५२

sa evamuktvā maghavantamunmukhaḥ kariṣyamāṇaḥ saśaraṁ śarāsanam |
atiṣṭhadālīḍhaviśeṣaśobhinā vapuḥprakarṣeṇa viḍambiteśvaraḥ || 3-52

3-52. Raising his head towards the sky, prince Raghu prepared for battle. Like an expert archer, he mounted his arrow on his bow, raised it skywards, and stood up with his right leg placed forward, slightly bent at the knee, and his left leg stretched straight behind him (which is a posture of a warrior before he makes his deadly move, or of a bowman, an archer, who is about to shoot an arrow at the enemy). With his stretched muscular body holding a bow and an arrow at the ready to shoot, Raghu resembled the majestic form of Lord Shiva as he had prepared to slay the demon Tripura.

[Note-- The Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14, describes that Lord Shiva is also known as the slayer of the demon Tirpurasur. Hence, Shiva or Rudra is also called Tripurari. The three cities ruled by Tripurasur symbolised the three worlds, viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world. At the time of slaying the demon Tripura, the lord of three cities or worlds, Lord Shiva had assumed a warrior's posture similar to that of prince Raghu as narrated in this verse.

Another version of the story of the demon Tripura and why Lord Shiva slayed him is as follows: Tripura had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) as a result of which the creator Brahma had granted him several boons which had made him invincible. He was killed by Lord Subramanya, the son of Shiva and Parvati. He had three sons—Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vindyumaali. They had also pleased Brahma and by his blessings built three great cities, collectively called ‘Tripura’. These cities were made of gold, silver and iron. These three demon brothers were collectively called Tripurasur—the demons of the three cities. When they became a nuisance for the Gods, Shiva destroyed these three cities as well as the demons with one arrow. Therefore he got the name of Tripurari—one who destroyed the three enemy cities.]

Verse no. 53:

रघोरवष्टम्भमयेन पत्रिणा हृदि क्षतो गोत्रभिदप्यमर्षणः।

नवाम्बुदानीकमुहूर्तलाञ्छने धनुष्यमोघं समधत्त सायकम्॥ ३-५३

raghoravaṣṭambhamayena patriṇā hr̥di kṣato gotrabhidapyamarṣaṇaḥ |
navāmbudānīkamuhūrtalāñchane dhanuṣya moghaṁ samadhatta sāyakam || 3-53

3-53. When Indra was hit on his chest by the long, thick and sturdy pillar-like arrow shot by prince Raghu, he became furious. In retaliation, Indra mounted his own invincible arrow or missile on his huge multicoloured bow that resembled the magnificent rain-bow formed against the backdrop of freshly formed rain bearing dark clouds in the sky¹.

{There is another way this verse can be interpreted: 'Raghu's defiance of Indra's authority and his open challenge to the latter to fight him before taking the horse away, infuriated the king of heaven as he had never been humiliated in this manner earlier. Hence, Raghu's words pierced Indra's heart, injuring his self-esteem and honour, and appeared to Indra as an actual arrow shot by the prince had slammed into his chest. So, in retribution, Indra lifted his bow and mounted his invincible arrow or missile on it.'}

[Note--¹Indra is a god that controls rain and clouds. The rain-bow is usually regarded as a bow of Indra that he periodically shows the world to exercise his authority over it, and to imply that the world gets its rainfall by his grace as he is the lord of the rain and its carrier, the cloud.

The weapon that Indra usually uses to attack his opponents is called a Vajra. It is a sort of a missile, and in practical terms is represented by the thunderbolt, a high voltage dart of dazzling energy that can reduce anything to ash, and even split huge boulders and crumble large sections of hill-sides mountain with its powerful strike.]

Verse no. 54:

दिलीपसूनोः स बृहद्भुजान्तरं प्रविश्य भीमासुरशोणितोचितः।

पपावनास्वादितपूर्वमाशुगः कुतूहलेनेव मनुष्यशोणितम्॥ ३-५४

dilīpasūnoḥ sa brhadbhujāntaraṁ praviśya bhīmāsuraśoṇitocitaḥ |
papāvanāsvāditapūrvamāśugaḥ kutūhaleneva manuṣyaśoṇitam || 3-54

3-54. The formidable arrow (or missile) shot by Indra was accustomed to drinking the blood of fierce demons, but it had never tasted human blood earlier. So, when this arrow pierced the chest of prince Raghu and for the first time tasted human blood, it relished it much.

Verse no. 55:

हरेः कुमारोऽपि कुमारविक्रमः सुरदिवपास्फालनकर्कशाङ्गुलौ |
भुजे शचीपत्रविशेषकाङ्किते स्वनामचिह्नं निचखान सायकम्॥ ३-५५

hareḥ kumāro'pi kumāravikramaḥ suradvipāsphālanakarkaśāṅgulau |
bhuje śacīpatraviśeṣakāṅkīte svanāmacihnaṁ nicakhāna sāyakam || 3-55

3-55. Prince Raghu, who matched 'Kumar', another name for Kartikeya, the warrior son of Lord Shiva, in his power, bravery, valour, courage and abilities (hareḥ kumāro'pi kumāravikramaḥ), took a firm stand and shot back at Indra with his own trademark arrow that bore his name and signature. This arrow slammed Indra's forearms whose fingers had become rough by rubbing them against the head and the sides of the celestial elephant known as Erawat (which belonged to Indra), and which also bore the tattoo mark of a Tilak¹ that represented Indra's close relationship with and constant remembrance of his consort Indrani (also called Sachi).

[Note--¹The Tilak mark is made in the centre of a woman's forehead above the nose. It is considered auspicious for the lady and implies that she is married and committed to her husband. It is also a subtle reminder for her that everything is going fine with her husband. When the husband dies, usually his widow erases this mark.

This mark is made by a paste of vermillion and oil with some fragrance added.

The presence of this mark on Indra's forearms means he gave his consort a permanent place near his chest as a token of his love for her. It also might have been caused as an imprint when Indrani had brought her forehead close and pressed it on her husband's arms as a means of expression of her love and absolute dependence upon Indra for her own protection, as well as an expression of her hope for Indra's welfare and continuous strength of his arms.

Further, the Tilak mark carries a lot of subtle power in a symbolic way as it represents the mystical powers that a woman acquires by the virtue of her faithfulness, honesty, chastity and loyalty towards her husband. Hence, this auspicious mark on Indra's forearms acted as a virtual shield for him to ensure that no harm comes to him, and his arms would have the upper hand during a confrontation with his enemies.]

Verse no. 56:

जहार चान्येन मयूरपत्रिणा शरेण शक्रस्य महाशनिध्वजम्
चुकोप तस्मै स भृशं सुरश्रियः प्रसह्य केशव्यपरोपणादिव॥ ३-५६

jahāra cānyena mayūrapatrinā śareṇa śakrasya mahāśanidhvajam|
cukopa tasmai sa bhr̥śaṁ suraśriyaḥ prasahya keśavyaparopañādiva || 3-56

3-56. With a second arrow that had feathers of a peacock at its tail end, Raghu sliced off and fell the flag mounted atop Indra's chariot. This flag had an emblem of Vajra (thunderbolt) marked on it, and it was an exclusive insignia of Indra as a king of heaven and gods.

This assault on the flag infuriated Indra more than the first attack that was directed at him, as this second attack challenged his authority and honour as the mighty and powerful king of heaven and gods, and was akin to someone forcibly and with impunity cutting the hair of Laxmi, the deity representing prosperity, power and privileges of all the gods in heaven, even while her protector, Indra, the king of heaven, stood by helplessly. {Verily indeed, it was a matter of utter shame and abject humiliation for Indra. Obviously, it was unbearable for Indra.}

Verse no. 57:

तयोरुपान्तस्थितसिद्धसैनिकं गरुत्मदाशीविषभीमदर्शनैः|
बभूव युद्धं तुमुलं जयैषिणोरधोमुखैरूर्ध्वमुखैश्च पत्रिभिः॥ ३-५७

tayorupāntasthitasiddhasainikaṁ garutmadāśīviṣabhīmadarśanaiḥ|
babhūva yuddhaṁ tumulaṁ jayaiṣiṇor adhomukhairūrdhvamukhaiśca patribhiḥ || 3-57

3-57. With both the warriors desiring victory over each other, a fierce battle took place. Indra had his face bent downwards from the sky, and Raghu had his face turned upwards to face Indra in the sky as the two rained ferocious serpent-like sharp and powerful arrows and missiles on each other, even as the gods in heaven and the soldiers of Raghu's army on earth stood motionless and watched in awe this no-holds barred tumultuous duel.

Verse no. 58:

अतिप्रबन्धप्रहितास्त्रवृष्टिभिस्तमाश्रयं दुष्प्रसहस्य तेजसः|
शशाक निर्वापयितुं न वासवः स्वतश्च्युतं वह्निमिवाद्भिरम्बुदः॥ ३-५८

atiprabandhaprahitāstravr̥ṣṭibhistam āśrayaṁ duṣprasahasya tejasah|
śaśāka nirvāpayitum na vāsavaḥ svataścyutaṁ vahnimivādbhirambudaḥ || 3-58

3-58. Although Indra rained many types of powerful weapons on Raghu, but he was unable to subdue the latter and overcome or neutralise his energy to fight back (as Raghu

had the blessings of the holy cow Nandini with him, as well as the fact that he was fighting for a cause to protect a fire sacrifice, whilst Indra was a thief who was on the wrong side of the law of Dharma as he was trying to defile the sacrifice and prevent its completion).

It was like the case when a fire set alight by the strike of lightening cannot be doused by the clouds no matter how sincerely it means to stop it, unless the clouds rain torrents of rain. Continuous strike by lightening would only aggravate the fire, not calm it down.

So likewise, no matter how many times Indra struck Raghu with powerful weapons, the former could not subdue the latter's energy and the will to fight back¹.

[Note--¹It will happen a while later when Indra quietly accepted his defeat without openly saying so. He pretended to calm down by telling Raghu that he was pleased with the latter's bravery, and asked him to seek a boon. Indra realised that it would be better to strike a deal peacefully rather than facing sure humiliation if he continued with his high-handedness. In the meanwhile, the battle raged fiercely.]

Verse no. 59:

ततः प्रकोष्ठे हरिचन्दनाङ्किते प्रमथ्यमानार्णवधीरनादिनीम्

रघुः शशाङ्कार्धमुखेन पत्रिणा शरासनज्यामलुनादिबडौजसः॥ ३-५९

tataḥ prakoṣṭhe haricandanāṅkīte pramathyamānārṇavadhīranādinīm |
raghuḥ śaśāṅkārdhamukhena patriṇā śarāsanajyāmalunādbiḍaujasasḥ || 3-59

3-59. In his third straight attack, Raghu used a crescent shaped or sickle shaped arrow to cut through the string of Indra's bow, the twang of which used to be so strong that it sounded like the roar of the ocean when it was being churned (like during a hurricane or high tide or the eruption of an underwater volcano), and which now remained lifeless in Indra's hands that had been smeared with a paste of sandalwood between the elbow and the palm, more markedly on the wrist.

[Note--Prince Raghu decided to defang Indra by immobilising his missile launching system--which in this case was Indra's formidable bow which he had used to shower a hail of arrows on Raghu. With its string cut, the bow became useless as a harmless wooden pole in Indra's hand, which effectively put an end to his powers to shoot even a single more arrow at Raghu.

In ancient times when bows and arrows were used in warfare, a paste of herbal medicines was smeared on the warrior's body to take care of injuries and wounds, as well as to support the body's muscular and circulatory system.]

Verse no. 60:

स चापमुत्सृज्य विवृद्धमत्सरः प्रणाशनाय प्रबलस्य विद्विषः।
महीध्रपक्षव्यपरोपणोचितं स्फुरत्प्रभामण्डलमस्त्रमाददे॥ ३-६०

sa cāpamutsrjya vivṛddhamatsarah praṇāśanāya prabalasya vidviṣaḥ|
mahīdhrapakṣavyaparopaṇocitaṁ sphuratprabhāmaṇḍalamastramādade || 3-60

3-60. Absolutely furious and flabbergasted at the ability of Raghu to confront him so boldly and even have the temerity to snap the string of his formidable bow so as to render it useless, Indra bristled with anger and wrathful vehemence. He threw the bow disdainfully away, and took out his dazzling infallible weapon called Vajra that had the stupendous power to even clip the sides of mountains.

[Note--The 'Vajra' is the thunderbolt weapon of Indra. When the lightening strikes hill sides and boulders on slopes of mountains, it cracks them and sends them tumbling down the slopes. The fierce, high energy stab of lightening even sets trees on fire, and its thunder seems to shake the heavy mountains and hills from their very foundation. Indra has used Vajra as a last resort when all other means to stop Raghu failed.]

Verse no. 61:

रघुर्भृशं वक्षसि तेन ताडितः पपात भूमौ सह सैनिकाश्रुभिः।
निमेषमात्रादवधूय च व्यथां सहोत्थितः सैनिकहर्षनिस्वनैः॥ ३-६१

raghurbhṛśaṁ vakṣasi tena tāḍitaḥ papāta bhūmau saha sainikāśrubhiḥ ||
nimeṣamātrādhūya ca vyathāṁ sahotthitaḥ sainikaharṣanisvanaiḥ || 3-61

3-61. When Indra's Vajra hit Raghu on his chest, he swooned and fell down unconscious while his companions and soldiers wailed and cried out aloud in dismay and distress. But Raghu soon recovered from the shock and regained his consciousness. He stood up boldly even as his soldiers and companions cheered thunderously at this development.

Verse no. 62:

तथापि शस्त्रव्यवहारनिष्ठुरे विपक्षभावे चिरमस्य तस्थुषः।
तुतोष वीर्यातिशयेन वृत्रहा पदं हि सर्वत्र गुणैर्निधीयते॥ ३-६२

tathāpi śastravyavahāraṇiṣṭhure vipakṣabhāve ciramasya tasthuṣaḥ|
tutoṣa vīryātiśayena vṛtrahā padaṁ hi sarvatra guṇairnidhīyate || 3-62

3-62. When Indra discovered the stupendous strength and the invincibility of prince Raghu (that was supported by his moral strength and determination to fulfil his father's auspicious vow of completing the horse sacrifice, something about which Indra was conscious he was on the wrong side of law of Dharma inspite of his lecturing on his

rights to stop such exercises--refer: verse nos. 48-50), who had been able to bear the attack of a very powerful weapon as the Vajra, and emerged unscathed from the attack--Indra, the slayer of demon named Vritta (vr̥trahā), silently appreciated and praised Raghu's courage, strength, grit, valour, and moral strength, because a true warrior appreciates these stellar qualities even in his fierce opponent.

[Note--Indra had no other options left now except to become calm and somehow make Raghu to agree to a peace proposal, for if Indra continued with his confrontationist attitude, then it was sure that he would lose his crown and throne of heaven even before the horse sacrifice is completed. Worse, it was now possible that Raghu would pounce upon him and throw him face down from his chariot, a shameful occurrence while all the gods of heaven were watching this duel with awe and anxiety. So therefore, Indra thought quickly and concluded that it is better to mend fences with Raghu before the worst happens.

This sudden change of heart or stance evidently shows how cunning and selfish Indra is. If he had won, there was no hope of Indra suddenly becoming friendly towards Raghu who had openly challenged his authority. But now, since the table had turned, he all-of-sudden became benevolent and ready to grant a boon to Raghu as is clear in verse no. 63 herein below.]

Verse no. 63:

**असङ्गमद्रिष्वपि सारवत्तया न मे त्वदन्येन विसोढमायुधम्।
अवेहि मां प्रीतमृते तुरङ्गमात्किमिच्छसीति स्फुटमाह वासवः॥ ३-६३**

asaṅgamadriṣvapi sāravattayā na me tvadanyena viśoḍhamāyudham।
avehi mām prītamṛte turaṅgamātkimicchasīti sphuṭamāha vāsavaḥ || 3-63

3-63. Indra said to Raghu in clear terms: "No one else has been able to face and emerge victorious from the attack of my Vajra that has the intrinsic power to crumble even mighty mountains. But you have successfully overcome its powers. This has pleased me a lot, and hence I wish to grant you some boon. So, except the horse, ask for anything else and I will grant it to you."

[Note--Indra, inspite of his abject defeat, was still unwilling to part with the horse. He was sceptical that if he gives the horse back, then two things would go against him--one, he will have no face to show in heaven when asked where the horse was, and second, he feared that Raghu's father would complete the hundredth horse sacrifice and claim the right to the throne and crown of heaven as his right by default. This second issue was more worrisome for Indra, because it was quite possible that the victorious Raghu would seek stiff retribution from Indra for all the horrible things that the latter had done to him if the sacrifice was completed successfully.]

Verse no. 64:

ततो निषङ्गादसमग्रमुधृतं सुवर्णपुङ्खद्युतिरञ्जिताङ्गुलिम्।
नरेन्द्रसूनुः प्रतिसंहरन्निषुं प्रियंवदः प्रत्यवदत्सुरेश्वरम्॥ ३-६४

tato niṣaṅgādasamagramudhṛtaṁ suvarṇapuṅkhadyutirañjitāṅgulim।
narendrasūnuḥ pratisaṁharanniṣuṁ priyaṁvadaḥ pratyavadatsureśvaram || 3-64

3-64. Raghu was about to shoot a final killer arrow on Indra, and he had almost taken this arrow, which had golden fins that even made the fingers of the prince look as if they were painted in a golden hue, out of his quiver when he heard the pacifying words of Indra.

Raghu, who had an amiable nature and had no intention for a show-down or aggravate things with Indra, put this half-drawn arrow back into its quiver.

[Note-- This explains why Indra was in such a hurry to make truce, as even a split second delay would have resulted in Raghu shooting his arrow at Indra, and that would have been the end of this haughty and egoist king of gods.]

Verse no. 65:

अमोच्यमश्वं यदि मन्यसे प्रभो ततः समाप्ते विधिनैव कर्मणि।
अजस्रदीक्षाप्रयतः स मदगुरुः क्रतोरशेषेण फलेन युज्यताम्॥ ३-६५

amocyamaśvaṁ yadi manyase prabho tataḥ samāpte vidhinaiva karmaṇi।
ajasradīkṣāprayataḥ sa madguruḥ kratoraśeṣeṇa phalena yujyatām || 3-65

3-65. Raghu replied to Indra: "Oh Indra! In case you think that you cannot part with the horse (for any reason whatsoever), then at least ensure that my father, who has been diligently engaged in doing the rituals associated with a horse sacrifice for so long, is blessed with a meritorious outcome and given due credit that would be equivalent to having been successful in completing all the hundred horse sacrifices.

{He has already completed ninety nine such sacrifices, and this is his last. So if you really want peace and a solution to this stand-off, I may let you off on the condition that my father gets all the merits and credits of completing hundred horse sacrifices even if the physical horse is not available to him. This is my condition for an honourable truce.}

Verse no. 66:

यथा स वृत्तान्तमिमं सदोगतस्त्रिलोचनैकांशतया दुरासदः।
तवैव संदेशहराद्विशांपतिः शृणोति लोकेश तथा विधीयताम्॥ ३-६६

yathā sa vṛttāntamimaṁ sadogatastrilocanaikāṁśatayā durāsadaḥ।
tavaiva saṁdeśaharādvīśāmpatiḥ śṛṇoti lokesa tathā vidhīyatām || 3-66

3-66. Oh guardian and king of the world (*lokeśa*)! Further, since my father is in the middle of performing Vedic rituals, he is like the three-eyed Lord Shiva engaged in meditation (*trilocanaikāṁśatayā*), and therefore he can't be approached by me without the horse. {Please understand my precarious condition. If I go empty-handed, without accompanying the horse, my father would become furious at me and his wrath would be too much for me to cope with just like the wrath of Shiva when he opens his third eye to burn to ashes anyone who disturbs his meditation.}

Hence, please arrange to inform him about your boon that you have granted to my father through any messenger of yours before I reach him (to pre-empt a calamitous happening).

[Note--Raghu expresses his reservations about the intentions of Indra to actually fulfil his promise. This conversation took place far away from the venue of the horse sacrifice, and the prince feared that Indra was playing a trick on him to save his own skin. If the prince goes back without the horse, and Indra rescinds on his promise, then Raghu would have no proof of what Indra had said to him, and that would be disastrous for the whole family. At a later stage, when Indra would be out of sight, there would be nothing Raghu would be able to do. So, to bind Indra to his words, Raghu devised this strategy because when Indra's messenger arrives at the venue, there would be hundreds of witnesses to what Indra has promised regarding his father being bestowed with merits and given credit points that would be equivalent to completion of hundred horse sacrifices, and when this promise is disclosed publicly, then Indra won't be able to walk back on his words.]

Verse no. 67:

तथेति कामं प्रतिश्रुवान्नघोर्यथागतं मातलिसारथिर्ययौ।

नृपस्य नातिप्रमनाः सदोगृहं सुदक्षिणासूनुरपि न्यवर्तत॥ ३-६७

tatheti kāmam pratiśruvānraghoryathāgataṁ mātalisārathirayayau|
nṛpasya nātipramanāḥ sadogṛhaṁ sudakṣiṇāsūnurapi nyavartata || 3-67

3-67. Indra promised Raghu that the latter's wish in this regard would be fulfilled, saying: "It would be done as you desire."

After that, Indra went his way back in the direction from which he had come, and Raghu turned with a heavy heart and a bowed head to return to his father.

[Note--Raghu had become very distraught and gloomy as he had failed to protect the horse as he was supposed to do. He wondered what answer would he give his father when he returned empty-handed. The only semblance of hope of redemption he had when he faced his father was Indra's promise that king Dilip would be informed about the developments, which in turn would make his father satisfied that his son had done the best he could do, and that the main objective of getting merits and credit points for successfully completing one hundred horse sacrifices have been achieved without making Indra an enemy, which would be an unwelcome situation because he was a senior god and the king of heaven.]

Verse no. 68:

तमभ्यनन्दत्प्रथमं प्रबोधितः प्रजेश्वरः शासनहारिणा हरेः।
परामृशन्हर्षजडेन पाणिना तदीयमङ्गं कुलिशव्रणाङ्कितम्॥ ३-६८

tamabhyanandatprathamam prabodhitam prajeśvaraḥ śāsanahāriṇā hareḥ।
parāmṛśanharṣajaḍena pāṇinā tadīyamaṅgam kuliśavraṇāṅkitam || 3-68

3-68. Since king Dilip had already been briefed by Indra's messenger about the entire episode, so when his son arrived the king received him warmly and affectionately. Dilip embraced his son lovingly, praised him for his valour, courage and commitment to duty, and moved his palms softly over the wounds on Raghu's body that were inflicted by Indra's Vajra.

[Note--When king Dilip showed his appreciation for his son Raghu and praised him, the latter felt extremely relieved. His fears and doubts were laid to rest, his consternation ended, and he cheered up.]

Verse no. 69:

इति क्षितीशो नवतिं नवाधिकां महाक्रतूनां महनीयशासनः।
समारुरुक्षुर्दिवमायुषः क्षये ततान सोपानपरम्परामिव॥ ३-६९

iti kṣitīśo navatiṁ navādhikāṁ mahākratūnām mahanīyaśāsanah।
samāruruṣṭurdivamāyusaḥ kṣaye tatāna sopānaparamparāmiva || 3-69

3-69. In this way, the noble and honourable king Dilip, who was desirous of ascending to heaven at the end of his life on earth, built a symbolic staircase of hundred steps consisting of ninety nine Vedic rituals associated with the horse sacrifice that he completed himself, and the hundredth step was provided by Indra himself as a token of the latter's acceptance and formal welcoming of the great king in the portals of heaven.

[Note--There was a so-called silver lining and a symbolic bumper reward for king Dilip in the entire episode. When Indra, the king of heaven, under whose domain king Dilip would have to live in heaven, himself granted the hundredth and the final step leading to heaven, it was more significant than the situation where Dilip would have laid this last step himself by succeeding in completion of the hundredth horse sacrifice-- because it implied that Indra was welcoming the king personally by laying the final step, i.e. the hundredth step himself so that his honourable guest could enter the portals of heaven by stepping on this hundredth step after successfully climbing up the previous ninety-nine steps. Indra's granting of the boon that Dilip would get the credit of successfully completing hundred horse sacrifices literally meant that Indra had no objection of Dilip coming to heaven, rather he had personally opened the door to invite his honoured guest into heaven.]

Verse no. 70:

अथ स विषयव्यावृत्तात्मा यथाविधि सूनवे नृपतिककुदं दत्त्वा यूने सितातपवारणम्।
मुनिवनतरुच्छायां देव्या तया सह शिश्रिये गलितवयसामिक्ष्वाकूणामिदं हि कुलव्रतम्॥ ३-७०

atha sa viṣayavyāvṛttātmā yathāvidhi sūnave nṛpatikakudaṁ dattvā yūne
sitātapavāraṇam|
munivanatarucchāyām devyā tayā saha śīśriye galitavayasāmikṣvākūṇāmidam hi
kulavratam || 3-70

3-70. Afterwards, king Dilip renounced all his attachments to this world and its objects. He anointed his son Raghu formally to the throne as the next king of the realm by placing a white parasol over his head, handed over his official sceptre (or mace or baton) to him, and assigned other paraphernalia symbolic of kingship to Raghu in a formal ceremony.

Then, king Dilip, along with his wife Sudakshina, retired to the forest to live a life of renunciation like hermits in a hermitage as was the honoured tradition of all the kings of the Ikshvaku race. {This was the last phase in the life of a person before his final exit from this world.}

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये तृतीयः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvyē tṛtīyaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 3rd canto of Kalidasa's Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-88:

Introduction

After ascending the throne of Ayodhya upon his father's death, king Raghu established himself as a glorious, powerful, compassionate and successful king and emperor. His acquired greater glory and fame after his father died and he ascended the throne just like the case of a burning fire acquiring greater brilliance and radiance after the sun has set in the evening.

During the first few sittings of his royal court, the learned ministers and senior advisors of the kingdom frankly presented to Raghu the two fundamental types of policies of governing a kingdom that were open to him to choose from--one that was based on the principles of Dharma (i.e. righteousness, probity, propriety, morality, ethics, scruples, and nobility of conduct and thought), and the other policy that was based on things that are considered as A-Dharma, i.e. the reverse of Dharma. This second policy used unfair means, deceit, tricks, fraud, cunning, crookedness, and every other tool that a king may use for achieving his selfishness ends. But to their delight, the advisors and

ministers found that their king, Raghu, chose the path of Dharma, instead of A-Dharma, as the standard benchmark of state policy.

During his rule, the deity known as 'Raj-Laxmi' who represented the power, authority, wealth and prosperity of the kingdom, as well as the goddess of knowledge, learning and erudition, known as 'Saraswati', consistently served king Raghu in a subtle way, as there was no dearth of any material thing, there was all-round prosperity, and there was no shortage of learned and wise people in his kingdom.

Even though earth has had many great and honourable kings in the past, still it felt glad and privileged to have king Raghu as its sovereign. The people too felt very fortunate to have Raghu as their king, and everyone in the society was so extremely pleased with him and his rule that gradually they began to forget king Dilip and the happy times under him, as the days under Raghu were so well spent that the sweet memory of the past slowly faded away. King Raghu got universal respect and acclaim for his noble character and virtuousness.

Right from his first year of ascending the throne, king Raghu established a rule marked by peace and prosperity. His immaculate character, his virtues, glory and majesty spread to far away lands just like the brilliant light of the sun spreads over a wide swathe of land in a clear sky during the month of autumn. Indra put down his bow representing the rain-bow before king Raghu, implying that Indra too acknowledged the greatness of Raghu, and that rain fell on demand on the land ruled by the latter, meaning that there was neither a drought nor famine anywhere. It also implied that the rainy season had come to an end.

Meanwhile, Raghu picked up his own bow to signify that like Indra in heaven, he too was ever-ready to protect the interests of his people and kingdom by overcoming enemies.

After the end of the rainy season when winter arrived, the soil became dry and conducive for the march of an army. So king Raghu decided to launch a military campaign to extend the boundaries of his present kingdom to conquer far away lands in all the directions of the earth that would enable him to establish his authority and sovereignty over vast tracts of land. Such military campaigns were called 'Dig-Vijay'--a grand campaign of victory and conquest of all the directions which ensures that the person who leads such a campaign has no one left to challenge him and his authority.

In the meantime, Raghu had also discovered that many of his subordinate lords and rulers of far-flung vassal states, that were under the overall formal command of the crown of Ayodhya, were scheming and conspiring against him after his father's death, thinking that Raghu was too young and lacked the experience to hold on to power and check them. To stop such elements from creating difficulties and hurdles for him, as well as pre-empting all chances of fragmentation of the kingdom, king Raghu decided to launch a military campaign not only to subdue these wayward rulers and prevent dissention and revolt by the vassal states by reiterating his sovereignty and authority over the realm, but at the same time also to establish a large empire extending in all the four directions with the city of Ayodhya as its centre of power and authority. This Canto describes in detail the valiant deeds of king Raghu towards this objective, and how he established himself as an undisputed emperor over a vast territory that is known as the Indian peninsula.

During this military campaign, king Raghu first marched eastward towards the Bay of Bengal, went to the kingdom of a ruler called Kamrupeshwar in the far-east part of the Indian sub-continent (the present day state of Assam) to establish his authority there. After that, he turned his path downwards to head south along the eastern coast of the Indian peninsula and went along the Coromandel coast all the way to Cape Comorin, the extreme south point of the sub-continent, which is also known as Kanyakumari. From there, he proceeded along the western coastline to move north until he came to the mouth of the river Indus and the country drained by that river, then he turned to the far north-western territories to conquer the kings of Persia and Kambhoj as well as the fierce Huna tribe of central Asia. After the conquest of these far away lands, he proceeded to the plateau below the base of the northern chain of mountains called the Himalayas, went upto the present-day state Kashmir, traced his footsteps back and finally reached his capital of Ayodhya.

Once a ruler or lord of a particular area was conquered during this mission, king Raghu restored him to his throne with full honours, except that he was to accept Raghu's sovereignty and pay periodical tributes as a symbolic gesture of acceptance of Raghu's authority. No one was either humiliated or killed. The result was that as the news spread, most of the kings on the eastern seaboard of the Indian peninsula decided to make a peaceful treaty without bloodshed, which in turn made it easy for Raghu to conquer the earth smoothly, without any resistance. It also helped to establish Raghu as a great king and emperor who had a broad outlook, a magnanimous heart and a charitable disposition towards those who did not provoke him unnecessarily.

Some kings, however, offered resistance later on, but all of them were subdued by king Raghu. All such rulers finally surrendered and accepted his sovereignty, paying rich tributes to him and forging a relationship of friendship with him. One such ruler was the king of the state of Kalinga on the eastern seaboard, the other was the king of the Pandaya dynasty in the south. Moving further ahead in the western direction above the Arabian ocean, Raghu fought a fierce battle to conquer the rulers of Paarsi and Kambhoj land (a reference to Persia and the adjacent land of Afghanistan). His fame even reached the ears of the Huna tribes of central Asia who envied his conquests. Thus, he conquered the entire Indian sub-continent during his roughly one year of voyage of conquest, called 'Dig-Vijay Yatra', that started at Ayodhya and ended here after completing the full circle.

All these conquests established Raghu as a powerful and invincible Emperor so much so that even the Gandharvas, the court musicians of heaven, applauded his achievements and sang laurels in his honour.

Everywhere, the conquered ruler paid rich tributes to king Raghu, and gifted him costly gifts that were exclusive to their regions.

He had started out on his campaign in the month of Autumn, and returned home around the beginning of the rainy season of the next year.

After his successful campaign during which he proclaimed his sovereignty in all the four directions of the land, king Raghu performed a sacrifice, called 'Vishwa-Jeet' {Vishwa = world; Jeet = conquest or victory over} sacrifice, to celebrate his successful campaign and formally declaring himself as an undisputed emperor of the extended realm. At the end of this ceremony, he distributed every pie that was collected as tribute during his campaign to alms-seekers, and whatever remained was given to Brahmins and

other members of the society. Such was the charitable, magnanimous and selfless nature of king Raghu that he did not keep anything for himself.

Many kings had joined him during the campaign, and they along with their armies had come with Raghu to Ayodhya. So, after the celebrations were over, Raghu showed honours to them, gave them gifts in return for their help, and bid them all farewell. Before departure, these kings bowed their heads before Raghu, who was now their emperor, and paid their respects to him.

This tradition that rulers and lords of the states that had submitted to the advancing army of an emperor undertaking a victory march across the length and breadth of the land by personally joining him or lending him a large detachment of their own armies and other war resources, helped the emperor to augment his own army's strength and resources, such as the need for replenishment of weapons, men and material to sustain the advancing troops in far away lands. Wounded soldiers were left behind in the care of the states which had agreed to surrender, and fresh soldiers were recruited from the surrendered state's own army. The emperor's army was given some rest, and arms, weapons and munitions of all denominations, food-stock, carriers, horses, elephants, and all other kinds of needs of the army were replenished at these stop-over points.

There was another military advantage in this system, as new war techniques, weapons and soldiers skilled in the use of new types of arms, ammunitions and war equipments were added to the original army and integrated with it. As time passed and the emperor advanced, his army only got stronger and more powerful with the addition of fresh skilled soldiers, weapons, arms and armour, as well as all sorts of materials needed to sustain the army on long marches far away from its home base, such as food-stocks, logistics and all other kinds of war accouterments and paraphernalia as mentioned above. Otherwise, the emperor's army would have faced the prospect of gradually getting diminished, which in turn would weaken it, and ultimately lead to its decimation in the hands of the army of his opponents in distant lands, as the home-army of the opposing king fought the emperor's army in a land with which the former was well acquainted, while the advancing army was alien to it.

Another point to note at this juncture is that when these kings, who had accompanied Raghu in the campaign and came with him to Ayodhya, saw that he had liberally donated everything that was given to him by way of tribute as mentioned herein above, they surely must have praised Raghu's noble nature and exemplary character; it raised the stature of Raghu in their eyes as a generous, magnanimous, gracious, kind, liberal, selfless and conscientious emperor and commander who did not covet any kind material gain for himself.

With this brief background information about the contents of Canto 4, let us now read it verse-by-verse as follows--

Verse no. 1:

स राज्यं गुरुणा दत्तं प्रतिपद्याधिकं बभौ
दिनान्ते निहितं तेजः सवित्रेव हुताशनः॥ ४-१

sa rājyaṃ guruṇā dattaṃ pratipadyādhikaṃ babhau |
dinānte nihitaṃ tejaḥ savitreva hutāśanaḥ || 4-1

4-1. King Raghu, who inherited the kingdom from his father, king Dilip, shone brightly like a fire whose brilliance come to the fore after the sun has set in the horizon.

[Note--Here, the late king Dilip is likened the sun that has set, and his son, the new king Raghu who followed in his footsteps, is compared to the brilliant fire whose flame, light and warmth are seen and felt after the sunset. Of course, the fire's warmth can be felt even during sunlight hours, but its true glory and radiance comes to the fore only after the sun is gone. Likewise, though Raghu's immaculate character, excellent virtues, impeccable qualities, stupendous valour and unmatched strength was known to everyone, especially after his stand-off with Indra and other instances during his growing-up days as a young crown prince, still when he stood up on his own two feet to replace his father and wore the latter's cap of shouldering the responsibilities of kingship, his stature and majestic presence reached new heights and gave him a new sheen as, by-and-by, he would prove his worth and establish himself as an honourable and esteemed emperor-cum-king of the realm as time passed.]

Verse no. 2:

दिलीपानन्तरं राज्ये तं निशम्य प्रतिष्ठितम्
पूर्वं प्रधूमितो राज्ञां हृदयेऽग्निरिवोत्थितः ॥ ४-२

dilīpānantaraṃ rājye taṃ niśamya pratiṣṭhitaṃ |
pūrvam pradhūmito rājñāṃ hrdaye'gnirivotthitaḥ || 4-2

4-2. When the news spread that prince Raghu has ascended the throne of his father, king Dilip, a fire of jealousy, covetousness and envy, that had remained so far dormant in the hearts of other kings and lords of the realm (i.e. the vassal states), was re-kindled and leapt up like a flame of a raging fire.

[Note--King Dilip had subdued many kings and lords of different states, and had amalgamated their kingdoms or domains with his own kingdom. Obviously, all such rulers harboured a silent grudge against Dilip, and were waiting for the time when Dilip would die and the throne fell vacant to start a revolt and declare independence, jointly or separately. But when they heard that Raghu has replaced his father to become the next king of Ayodhya, they became envious of him as all of them were aware of his astounding abilities and martial skills, and this meant their own ambitions won't bear fruits. But nevertheless, there were undercurrents of restlessness and resentment in their ranks, and as the conspiracy spread, there was hush-hush grumbling and scheming on their part.

This is one of the reasons why Raghu had to go on a military campaign, about which we shall be reading later in this canto, to reassert his authority and sovereignty

over all these states, and prevent the disintegration of the kingdom established by his great father.]

Verse no. 3:

पुरुहूतध्वजस्येव तस्योन्नयनपङ्क्तयः।

नवाभ्युत्थानदर्शिन्यो ननन्दुः सप्रजाः प्रजाः॥ ४-३।

puruhūtadhvajasyeva tasyoonnayanapañktayah|

navābhyutthānadarśinyo nananduh saprajāḥ prajāḥ || 4-3

4-3. Meanwhile, the subjects of the kingdom under king Raghu felt very happy at his becoming their king. Raghu's newly acquired status and his already established reputation was akin to the high flying flag of Indra, the king of gods, that occupies its own high status, and invites respect and honour amongst all the flags of the kings in this world.

[Note--Here, king Raghu's fame, reputation, glory and honour are compared to the flag of Indra. Wherever Indra goes, he is recognised from far away by the flag fluttering atop his chariot, which immediately commands respect and reverence from everyone around because Indra is the king of heaven and the gods. So likewise, Raghu's fame preceded him anywhere he went, and his mere name and presence invited respect and honour from one and all. He stood on a high pedestal in the community of kings. His subjects regarded themselves very privileged to be under his rule, and loved him as a son would love his caring and famous father.

The contrast is very sharp here--while other kings and rulers, who were under the overall sovereignty of the king of Ayodhya and paid tributes to the latter to acknowledge that they were under his rule, felt jealous and were unhappy at Raghu's becoming the king, his subjects, on the other hand, rejoiced and felt happy.]

Verse no. 4:

सममेव समाक्रान्तं द्वयं दिवरदगामिना।

तेन सिंहासनं पित्र्यमखिलं चारिमण्डलम्॥ ४-४

samameva samākrāntaṁ dvayaṁ dviradagāminā|

tena simhāsanaṁ pitryamakhilaṁ cāriṁaṇḍalam || 4-4

4-4. Like a majestic elephant that stands tall in its own herd as well as in the community of other animals, king Raghu bore the flag of kingship that he inherited from his father, king Raghu, high by establishing his dominance over two things simultaneously--one was the throne that he inherited from his father, and the other was the whole host of his enemies (both internal ones within the kingdom, and external ones outside his domain) who were jealous of him and were conspiring to create unrest in his kingdom with an intention to create problems that would ultimately dethrone him.

{This verse can be interpreted in a different way as follows: Sitting atop a majestic elephant, king Raghu held high the flag of kingship which he had inherited from his father, king Dilip, along with the authority, powers and honours that accompany it, in order to establish and reiterate his authority and firm hold over the throne of his own kingdom, as well as to establish his dominance over the vassal states and other neighbouring kingdoms who may harbour jealousy and ill-will against him and his rule.}

[Note--Raghu had to face two types of challenges to his rule--one that came from conspirators from amongst his own subjects such as ministers, courtiers and lords of vassal lands, and the other was from kings and rulers of neighbouring kingdoms who were jealous and resentful of the prosperity and fame of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and wanted to create dissent, unrest and chaos within the kingdom to make its king weak and vulnerable, so that in due course of time his fame, authority, strength and powers decline and ultimately fade away into oblivion, and at the same time the kingdom itself breaks down into smaller fractions that would make it easier for the neighbouring kings to gobble up sections of the kingdom bordering their own realms.]

Verse no. 5:

छायामण्डललक्ष्येण तमदृश्या किल स्वयम्]

पद्मा पद्मातपत्रेण भेजे साम्राज्यदीक्षितम्॥ ४-५

chāyāmaṇḍalalakṣyeṇa tamadrśyā kila svayam|

padmā padmātapatreṇa bheje sāmrajyadīkṣitam || 4-5

4-5. The goddess Laxmi, the deity of prosperity, wealth, good fortune and well-being in all spheres of life, herself began serving and supporting king Raghu and his kingdom subtly by remaining by the king's side in an invisible form, and ensuring that the ceremonial lotus-shaped umbrella of kingship above his head was always protected and shined brilliantly.

{Another way of interpreting this verse is as follows: When Raghu ascended the throne, goddess Laxmi, the deity of prosperity, wealth, good fortune and well-being in all spheres of life, herself began serving and supporting king Raghu and his kingdom by standing by his side, albeit in an invisible form, to hold a lotus-shaped and splendid ceremonial umbrella over his head to indicate his unchallenged and undisputed authority over the kingdom.}

[Note--There was universal prosperity, good fortune and all-round welfare in the kingdom when Raghu was anointed as its king. Goddess Laxmi herself ensured that everything was well looked after, that there was no dearth of anything, and stability, peace and happiness prevailed in the country.]

Verse no. 6:

परिकल्पितसानिध्या काले काले च बन्दिषु।
स्तुत्यं स्तुतिभिरर्थ्याभिरुपतस्थे सरस्वती॥ ४-६

parikalpitasāṁnidhyā kāle kāle ca bandiṣu।
stutyam stutibhirarthyaābhirupatasthe sarasvatī || 4-6

4-6. At the same time, goddess Saraswati, the deity of knowledge, erudition, learning and speech, too served king Raghu in a subtle way in the form of meaningful praises and laurels that were sung in his honour by bards and scholars who were well-versed in the intricacies of language and poetical compositions.

[Note--The idea is that the praises of king Raghu were composed by scholars who were experts in language and poetry, so that the verses they composed and were sung by bards were not only perfect in grammar and linguistic, but were honest and truthful in their meaning in as much as they did not sing false or boastful praises in honour of the king to satisfy his ego and flatter him, but spoke about his true character, virtues, glories and achievements. Since Saraswati is deemed to be the patron deity of knowledge and skills, it is deemed that she herself chose to praise and honour king Raghu through the medium of these composers, singers and royal bards.

The case of Raghu defied the common perception that wealth and learning cannot coexist, because in his case both Laxmi and Saraswati attended him personally, albeit indirectly and in an invisible form.]

Verse no. 7:

मनुप्रभुतिर्मान्यैर्भुक्ता यद्यपि राजभिः।
तथाप्यनन्यपूर्वेव तस्मिन्नासीद्वसुंधरा॥ ४-७

manuprabhutirmānyairbhuktā yadyapi rājabhiḥ।
tathāpyananyapūrveva tasminnāsīdvasuṁdharā || 4-7

4-7. Although many honourable kings, right from Manu onwards, had ruled over this earth and enjoyed its wealth and prosperity, but never had the mother earth been so happy and felt obliged to any of them as she was with king Raghu. She literally got a new lease of life, felt rejuvenated and refreshed, and was very glad to have Raghu as her caretaker lord and king. So therefore, earth felt delighted to serve Raghu and developed a close bond with him like a doting mother would always favour her favourite son who cares for his mother and takes good measures for her well-being, as well as a lady who is so enamoured and enchanted by her lover that she would go out of her way to serve him and keep him happy in every possible way by employing all resources at her command, because she had never found anyone so worthy of her affection and adoration as her present lover was.

[Note--There had been a long line of great and illustrious kings in the past, all descending from the same ancestor named Manu, and they all ruled over the land and enjoyed its fruits in the form of wealth, such as agricultural products, gems and minerals, comfortable habitat etc., that the earth offered to them. But the earth felt she was being exploited all the while, and little attention was paid to her welfare and life. The situation changed with king Raghu's ascendance. With him at the helm, the mother earth felt very happy and contented. She truly liked king Raghu, and loved him like a doting mother would always favour her favourite son who cares for his mother and takes good measures for her well-being, as well as a lady who is so enamoured and enchanted by her lover that she would go out of her way to serve him and keep him happy in every possible way.

Earth showed her kindness and benevolence towards king Raghu by ensuring that his subjects never felt shortage of anything, such as crops, vegetables, fruits, water, a habitable land, greenery and abundance of everything else that the earth produces. At the same time, earth produced precious minerals, metals and gemstones in such abundance that the treasury of king Raghu was overflowing with them. If the king went out on an expedition, earth took care that the path of his entourage was dry and well shaded by trees with thick foliage, and he did not face physical hurdles as muddy or slippery land, or lack of water on the way as all the water resources, such as wells, ponds and lakes were filled with clean water.]

Verse no. 8:

**स हि सर्वस्य लोकस्य युक्तदण्डतया मनः।
आददे नातिशीतोष्णो नभस्वानिव दक्षिणः॥ ४-८**

sa hi sarvasya lokasya yuktadaṇḍatayā manah|
ādade nātiśītoṣṇo nabhasvāniva dakṣiṇaḥ || 4-8

4-8. King Raghu won the hearts of all by dispensing justice and giving punishment for wrong-doings in accordance with the seriousness of the offence that was tempered by a considerate attitude that tilted more towards compassion, forgiveness and rehabilitation rather than towards vengeance and retribution.

This wise, prudent and judicious approach of king Raghu endeared him to his subjects and acted as a soothing balm for them as they felt comfortable in willingly accepting his judgements and decisions just like the case of one feeling comfortable when touched by a breeze that is neither too cold like the air of the snowy mountains in the north, nor too hot like the wind blowing in from the southern direction which is heated when it passes over the hot land of the south.

[Note--King Raghu's judgements were well balanced and addressed the offence more than the person who had committed it. His approach was to try to reform the offender and motivate him not to repeat the offence again, rather than putting him in prison and making him suffer, which in turn would have made the wrong-doer more adamant and stubborn in his determination to seek retribution for his sufferings. After all, the king thought, a person commits an offence under some circumstances, and no one would

ordinarily do anything wrong if not forced to do it. So he always tried to go the root and find out the reason that made a person commit the crime, and emphasised the need for reforming the individual rather than subjecting him to physical and mental agony.

As a result of this approach, there was almost no crime in his kingdom, and some random vagrants who had strayed away from the right path, and, voluntarily or inadvertently, treaded on the wrong path, were motivated to reform themselves by giving them a chance at making a fresh start in life and regret the errors they had made.

King Raghu did not subscribe to the view that one-size-fits-all, as all his judgements were fine-tuned and well thought to suit the individual nature of the offence, the circumstances under which the offender committed the crime, and the willingness of the offender to reform himself and regret the wrong-doing.]

Verse no. 9:

**मन्दोत्कण्ठाः कृतास्तेन गुणाधिकतया गुरौ
फलेन सहकारस्य पुष्पोद्गम इव प्रजाः॥ ४-९**

mandotkanṭhāḥ kṛtāstena guṇādhikatayā gurau|
phalena sahakārasya puṣpodgama iva prajāḥ || 4-9

4-9. By his noble character, excellent qualities, judicious implementation of laws and regulations, as well as his magnanimous attitude and benevolent nature, king Raghu endeared himself to his subjects so much that as time passed, the memory of his father and the latter's benevolent rule faded away from the memory of the subjects, just like the case when a mango tree begins to bear sweet mangoes in such abundance that everyone has his share of the ripened fruit, then rarely would one think of the seed or the period that the tree took to grow up to finally bear the desired fruit. In the final analysis, it is the fruit that matters rather than the efforts made to plant the tree and see that it is well looked after during its growth period.

[Note--As we have read in the previous cantos, king Dilip had no son during his earlier period of rule. Then after a lot of effort and self-sacrifice amounting to doing severe penance and austerity, he begot a son named Raghu. The young prince grew under the care of his father who paid close attention on his all-round development. Fortunately, the son turned out to be a noble prince with excellent characters and qualities, a prince who had a charitable disposition, believed in principles of Dharma, and adhered to laws and rules. In brief, Raghu not only inherited his father's throne as well as his qualities and characters, but even surpassed him in all aspects of goodness and majesty. King Raghu's glories and fame outshined those of his father, and he established himself as a very worthy son of an equally worthy father.

So therefore, as time passed, the memory of his father faded away from the minds of his subjects as they began to enjoy their current lives under their new king, i.e. Raghu.]

Verse no. 10:

नयविद्धिर्नवे राज्ञि सदसच्चोपदर्शितम्।

पूर्व एवाभवत्पक्षस्तस्मिन्नाभवदुत्तरः॥ ४-१०

nayavidbhirnave rājñi sadasaccopadarśitam।

pūrva evābhavatpakṣastasminnābhavaduttaraḥ || 4-10

4-10. Those advisors and senior ministers who were experts in politics, diplomacy, jurisprudence and laws of governance, placed before king Raghu the two aspects of each of these fields--one that used fairness, truthfulness, and relied on the principles of Dharma (such as auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, and goodness of thoughts and deeds), and the other that tilted towards the opposite of these virtues such as unfair means, deceit, falsehoods, and all other means that can be classified as being A-Dharma (i.e. opposite of Dharma).

But noble and honourable as he was, king Raghu chose the first option over the second to the effect that his rule was marked by adherence to the principles of Dharma that followed the path of honour, dignity, fairness and righteousness, rather than opting for the opposite in order to serve selfishness and greed for power.

[Note--It is obvious that when king Raghu declared that principles of Dharma and goodness would lead all his actions and decisions, that his rule would be remembered and esteemed for its virtuousness, nobility, dignity, fairness and honour, all his ministers and advisors rejoiced. The news of this system of state policy spread far and wide rapidly, and established king Raghu's reputation and glories as a dignified and honourable king in a very short time.]

Verse no. 11:

पञ्चानामपि भूतानामुत्कर्षं पुपुषुर्गुणाः।

नवे तस्मिन्महीपाले सर्वं नवमिवाभवत्॥ ४-११

pañcānāmapi bhūtānāmutkarṣaṁ pupuṣurguṇāḥ।

nave tasminmahīpāle sarvaṁ navamivābhavat || 4-11

4-11. All the primary elements of Nature, called the 'Pancha-Mahabhuts'¹, acquired excellence in their fields and thrived with renewed vigour under the rule of their new king Raghu. Since everything in this world is made from these five primary elements, it follows that everything appeared to be fresh and rejuvenated as if new life was injected into them.

[Note--¹The five primary elements of Nature from which everything in existence has come into being are earth, water, fire, air and sky or space. Hence, 'earth' acquired pleasant fragrance and richness of resources that it possessed, 'water' became clean, cool and in abundance, 'fire' was always lighted but remained restrained (i.e. there were no episodes of fire burning things), 'air' became fresh, cool and comfortable in all the

seasons, and 'sky' likewise remained clean and free from dust (which ensured adequate sunlight and space for a clean and healthy environment).]

Verse no. 12:

यथा प्रह्लादनाच्चन्द्रः प्रतापात्तपनो यथा

तथैव सोऽभूदन्वर्थो राजा प्रकृतिरञ्जनात्॥ ४-१२

yathā prahlādanāccandraḥ pratāpāttapano yathā|
tathaiva so'bhūdanvartho rājā prakṛtirañjanāt || 4-12

4-12. Just like the case of the moon getting its rightful honour as a pleasant and soothing entity because of its cool and comforting light, and the sun acquiring the epithet of a scorcher because of its heat, likewise king Raghu too was rightly honoured and acquired a reputation worthy of him as a noble king who pleased his subjects and made everyone happy.

[Note--As is apparent here, king Raghu is likened to the 'moon' in this verse because he gave happiness and comfort to his subjects, as opposed to the 'sun' which scorches and torments everyone because of its heat. Raghu was not a cruel and harsh ruler, but one who was very kind, compassionate and considerate.]

Verse no. 13:

कामं कर्णान्तविश्रान्ते विशाले तस्य लोचने

चक्षुष्मत्ता तु शास्त्रेण सूक्ष्मकार्यार्थदर्शिना॥ ४-१३

kāmaṁ karṇāntaviśrānte viśāle tasya locane|
cakṣuṣmattā tu śāstreṇa sūkṣmakāryārthadarśinā || 4-13

4-13. Though king Raghu had broad or large physical eyes that literally extended to his ears (i.e. he could see and hear everything himself seamlessly, in fine detail, and coordinate between what is seen and what is heard), yet it was his remarkable ability to delve deep into any given situation and analyse the information to discern the reality, to see and hear what was not apparent on the surface but was nevertheless the fact of the matter, through his faculties of intelligence, logic and reasoning that were based on the principles of good governance and jurisprudence which his erudite and sagacious mind possessed because of his deep knowledge of the relevant scriptures and treatises, that were of real help to him and stood him in good stead (as compared to what the physical eyes saw and ears heard, as often these would lead to wrong interpretations and judgements).

[Note--It often happens that what is seen is not the truth, and the best example of it is the mirage seen in a desert on a hot day. A weary and thirsty man sees water in the distance

on the hot sandy land of a desert while the sun blazes overhead, and he staggers in that direction with the hope that he would find water to quench his parched throat, but the nearer he goes the further away that water moves away from him.

Similarly, it also sometimes happens that when we hear a particular sound we interpret it is some way in which our mind has been accustomed to interpret that kind of input, but the reality may be very different. For instance, the sound of a bomb exploding may hear like some firework being played in a distance on a celebratory occasion, and only when we hear sound of people crying and wailing and witness a chaos unfolding that we realise that it was a crude bomb meant to unleash mayhem. Similarly, a thunderclap may sound like the boom of gunfire, but it isn't.

These are only some random examples to explain that often what is seen and heard are not the truth, and the reality lies somewhere else. So therefore, king Raghu would hear and see everything directly or through messengers or spies, but he would spend some time to put two and two together, question diverse people and gather more information from other sources to arrive at a decision, instead of falling in the trap of impulsive decisions. This ability to weigh the pros and cons, and analyse different possibilities and situations, gave him an edge over his adversaries and those trying to mislead him by misinformation and falsehoods, for he would rely more on his own intelligence and analytical mind than simply believe on what is seen and told by others.]

Verse no. 14:

लब्धप्रशमनस्वस्थमथैनं समुपस्थिता

पार्थिवश्रीर्द्वितीयेव शरत्पङ्कजलक्षणा ॥ ४-१४

labdhaprasāmanasvasthamathainam samupasthitā|

pārthivaśrīrdvītiyeva śaratpaṅkajalakṣaṇā || 4-14

4-14. A year passed during the course of which king Raghu established law and order in his kingdom. As the next autumn arrived and lotus flowers bloomed, he felt it was an indication for him to further reinforce his authority and establish his sovereignty over distant lands. He felt that the fresh bloom of the lotus flowers symbolised an invitation by the 'Rajya-Laxmi' (the deity representing the wealth and prosperity of the kingdom who sat on a lotus and also held one in each of her two hands) approved of him, blessed him, and wanted him to expand his rule and strengthen his hold over the kingdom.

[Note--In iconography, goddess Laxmi is depicted as either sitting or standing on a blooming lotus flower, as well as holding one in each of her two hands.]

Verse no. 15:

निर्वृष्टलघुभिर्मघैर्मुक्तवर्त्मा सुदुःसहः

प्रतापस्तस्य भानोश्च युगपद्व्यानशे दिशः ॥ ४-१५

nirvṛṣṭalaghubhirmeghairmuktavartmā suduḥsahāḥ|
pratāpastasya bhānośca yugapadvyānaśe diśaḥ || 4-15

4-15. The arrival of autumn marked the end of the rainy season when the clouds had dispersed and the sky was clear. Further, the scorch of the sun as witnessed during the harsh summer had also given way to pleasant sunshine that spread over all parts of the land.

[Note--Traditionally, this was the season used by kings to launch military campaigns as the weather conditions would be conducive to such endeavours. Summer was harsh, rainy season made the land slushy and slippery, and constant rain created hurdles for logistics and presented difficulties for soldiers at the battle-field, while the winter season came with its own set of problems with chill, icy winds, and shorter days.]

Verse no. 16:

वार्षिकं संजहारेन्द्रो धनुर्जैत्रं रघुर्ददौ|
प्रजार्थसाधने तौ हि पर्यायोद्यतकर्मकौ॥ ४-१६

vārṣikaṁ saṁjahārendro dhanurjaitraṁ raghurdadau|
prajāṛthasādhane tau hi paryāyodyatakārmukau || 4-16

4-16. Indra, the lord of heaven and rains, put down his bow represented by the rainbow (because when the skies cleared and clouds vanished, there was no chance of a rainbow forming), while king Raghu picked up his own bow that represented his valour and strength (which symbolically meant that he readied and prepared himself to launch a campaign to reiterate, reinforce and establish his authority over the land so that the rule of law was enforced, and all unruly subjects and vassal states were brought under control).

Thus, both of them--Indra and Raghu--fulfilled their obligations and did the duties assigned to them in the broader scheme of things as ordained by the Creator: Indra carried out his duties to provide rain to the people, and Raghu carried out his duties to maintain law and order in the kingdom.

Verse no. 17:

पुण्डरीकातपत्रस्तं विकसत्काशचामरः|
ऋतुर्विडम्बयामास न पुनः प्राप तच्छ्रियम्॥ ४-१७

punḍarikātapatrastaṁ vikasatkāśacāmarāḥ|
ṛturviḍambayāmāsa na punaḥ prāpa tacchriyam || 4-17

4-17. The autumn season attempted to imitate the majesty and glory of king Raghu with its blooming lotuses to represent the royal parasol over the head of a king, and the swaying grass with long stalks and fur-like flowers at the top to represent the fans that

were swayed before the king when he sat on his throne in the royal court, but no matter how hard and best it tried, the autumn could not match the majesty, glory and splendour of king Raghu.

With all its natural beauty at its command, autumn was, at best, only a shadow of king Raghu's majestic presence, and it could not match the royal aura and stature of king Raghu by any account.

Verse no. 18:

प्रसादसुमुखे तस्मिंश्चन्द्रे च विशदप्रभे
तदा चक्षुष्मतां प्रीतिरासीत्समरसा द्वयोः॥ ४-१८

prasādasumukhe tasmimścandre ca viśadaprabhe|
tadā cakṣuṣmatāṁ prītirāsītsamarasā dvayoḥ || 4-18

4-18. People developed equal affection towards king Raghu and a full moon during the autumn season as both had equal charm and both were equally welcoming --Raghu's face showed benevolence and kindness towards those who looked at him (for help, support, mercy, grace and consideration), while the moon's face was cool and soothing to the eye, giving emotional comfort and solace to a tormented soul. Hence, people found both equally adorable and praiseworthy.

Verse no. 19:

हंसश्रेणीषु तारासु कुमुद्वत्सु च वारिषु
विभूतयस्तदीयानां पर्यस्ता यशसामिव॥ ४-१९

haṁsaśreṇīṣu tārāsu kumudvatsu ca vāriṣu|
vibhūtayastadīyānāṁ paryastā yaśasāmiva || 4-19

4-19. The glory, majesty and fame of king Raghu were widespread and well acknowledged in all the corners of the world so much so that rows of white swans cruising in the clear autumnal sky during the day, the sparkling and twinkling stars dotting the sky in the night, as well as the clear surface water of lakes and ponds during this season were virtually reflecting Raghu's own immaculate character that was spotlessly clean, transparent and pleasing for all (just like the sight of these three aspects of mother Nature cited in this verse are).

[Note--It is an acknowledged fact that the rows of white swans flying in the clear sky, the twinkling spangle of stars in the night sky, and the clean water on the surface of the ponds and lakes look very charming and adorable. In effect, they symbolise the clean and immaculate character of king Raghu whose fame had spread to all corners of the world and the heaven as represented respectively by the waters of the ponds and lakes on earth

and the swans in the sky, as well as the stars of the heaven that stand for far-away distant lands.]

Verse no. 20:

इक्षुच्छायनिषादिन्यस्तस्य गोप्तुर्गुणोदयम्
आकुमारकथोद्धातं शालिगोप्यो जगुर्यशः॥ ४-२०

ikṣucchāyaniṣādinyastasya gopturguṇodayam|
ākumārakathoddhātaṁ śāligopyo jaguryaśaḥ || 4-20

4-20. Women folk who were appointed to watch and guard the fields of corn and rice crops, sat under the shade of closely packed tall stalks of sugarcane (or umbrellas made by tying together long blades of reed grass) and sang the glories of their protector king Raghu, beginning from his birth and early childhood days, and gradually progressing to recall and narrate his heroic deeds as he grew up to become an adult, and finally to become their king and protector.

[Note--Women folk usually sing songs or recite poems in chorus describing the heroism of great kings and divine qualities of great sages and saints to pass time and keep themselves engaged. The singing and recital of poems loudly also helped them to keep awake for long hours, besides warding-off animals, birds and thieves who would otherwise sneak in to eat or steal the crop if they find that there is no one to watch their intrusion.]

Verse no. 21:

प्रससादोदयादम्भः कुम्भयोनेर्महौजसः|
रघोरभिभवाशङ्कि चुक्षुमे दिवषतां मनः॥ ४-२१

prasasādodayādambhaḥ kumbhayonermahaujasah|
raghorabhibhavāśaṅki cukṣume divṣatāṁ manaḥ|| 4-21

4-21. Just as the water of the different water-bodies, such as lakes and ponds, became clear and clean with the rising of the star and its constellation named after the great sage Agastya, i.e. the star called 'Canopus' and its constellation called 'Argo Navis', in the month of autumn, so likewise the ascendance of king Raghu created fear of defeat and humiliation in the heart of his enemies (so much so that they dared not rise against him, challenge his authority or create any kind of chaos).

[Note--Prior to autumn the water bodies were dirty because rainwater flowing in from the surrounding areas would bring dirt, mud, dried leaves, and other kinds of garbage with its flow. But when the rainy season ends and the earth dries up, this inflow too stops, and the

mud and other polluting things slowly settle down on the bed of the water body or decay on their own, thereby leaving its surface clean and clear.

The Agastya star rises and is clearly seen during the autumn sky, and it coincides with the appearance of the clean water bodies.

Likewise, all conspiracies, evil planning and dirty schemes of king Raghu's enemies lasted only till the time he had not ascended the throne of Ayodhya and established his control over the kingdom, but as soon as he was declared a king and smoothly asserted his authority and sovereignty over the realm, all his enemies became quiet. There was calm, quiet and order everywhere, and all chances of disturbance, turbulence or chaos in the society became history.

Sage Agastya is said to rest in the heavens in the form of the star Canopus belonging to the constellation Argo Navis. The time of the rising of this star is about late August-early September, corresponding to the end of the monsoon season when the water of ponds and lakes gradually becomes clear and loses its turbidity.]

Verse no. 22:

**मदोदग्राः ककुद्मन्तः सरितां कूलमुद्रुजाः।
लीलाखेलमनुप्रापुर्महोक्षास्तस्य विक्रमम्॥ ४-२२**

madodagrāḥ kakudmantāḥ saritām kūlamudrujāḥ।
līlākhelamanuprāpurmahokṣāstasya vikramam॥ 4-22

4-22. Large and strong bulls who had high humps and broad, muscular shoulders would play sport by furiously digging up earth on the banks of rivers and lakes in an attempt to imitate the strength and prowess of their king Raghu who also had a well-built and muscular body, and while out playing sport or hunting would similarly show intense energy and prowess.

[Note--When an infuriated bull dashes forward, or when two such bulls fight each other, everyone in the vicinity run helter-skelter for cover because these bulls have such extraordinary strength that anyone or anything that comes in their way is sure to be trampled upon, crushed underfoot, and smothered to death.

Likewise, when king Raghu dashed furiously forward towards an enemy in a battle, or at the targeted wild animal during hunting expeditions, or for that matter during any sporting activity requiring physical stamina and prowess, it was sure that anyone who came in the way would meet his end, because once Raghu determined to do anything, there was no stopping him.]

Verse no. 23:

**प्रसवैः सप्तपर्णानां मदगन्धिभिराहताः।
असूययेव तन्नागाः सप्तधैव प्रसुसुवुः॥ ४-२३**

prasavaiḥ saptaparnānām madagandhibhirāhatāḥ|
asūyayeva tannāgāḥ saptadhaiva prasusruvuḥ|| 4-23

4-23. The pleasant fragrance of the paste made from the extract of seven types of flowers or seven types of leaves which king Raghu used to smear all over his body made his royal elephants become jealous so much so that to imitate their lord they too would secrete a scented fluid called ichor from seven parts of their bodies.

[Note--The fluid that came out from the seven organs of the elephants would smell pleasant instead of being foul. The seven outlets of the body of an elephant from which fluid flows out are the following-- two temples from which the scented ichor actually effuses, along with other outlets of the body such as the two nostrils, two eyes, and penis, the secretions of which also has a unique smell.

The seven flowers whose aromatic essential oils extracted from their petals, leaves and stems and used to make perfumes of various types, such as scented ointments, pastes or sprays in the context of the Indian sub-continent where king Raghu had his kingdom are ordinarily the following-- rose, jasmine, lavender, sunflower (also called marigold), chrysanthemum (also called Autumn Daisy), magnolia grandiflora (also known as bull bay), and dahlia.

To make the perfume exotic and add value to it, some of these flowers are replaced by others for the unique characteristics of their aromatic essential oils and scents. By mixing different varieties of flowers and changing the ratio of the essential oils used in the preparation of the perfume, a wide variety of choice in scents can be conjured up. Hence, other flowers, besides the ones mentioned herein above, that are often used for this purpose are the following-- ylang-ylang, neroli, tuberose and peony.

That said, now let us briefly read about each one of them:--

(i) The 'rose' is a common household name. Its extracts has a cooling effect and a fragrance that is well loved by all. In a way, rose is a queen of flowers. The essential oil extract of the rose is used in summers as a coolant and widely employed as an additive in cooling drinks, as well as in soaps and lotions to sooth the body.

(ii) The 'jasmine' is a climbing shrub whose leaves are made of seven or nine smaller leaflets, and are long, pointed and oval. The reference to 'seven leaves' in the main text of this verse perhaps refers to this particular feature of the jasmine flower. The flower itself is white in colour and its fragrance is sweet and highly aromatic.

(iii) The 'lavender' flower is smooth, soft and fragrant. The aroma is due to the essential oils released from its stems, leaves and petals.

(iv) The 'sunflower', also called marigold, is used in scented soaps and hair oils. Its extract is used to heal wounds and cuts as it acts as an antiseptic and antibiotic. This particular quality is very useful for the army to provide relief to wounded soldiers in the field. In homeopathy system of medicines, its essence is called 'calendula', and it is an excellent remedy for healing cuts and wounds. It is a member of the daisy family Asteraceae. It derives its name from its shape which resembles a sun--bright yellow and circular, and the fact that it always aligns itself to face the sun. It stands for longevity, positivity, happiness, warmth, good luck, cheerfulness, loyalty, resilience and growth. In ancient civilisations, it was worshipped as representing the Sun-God. In Hinduism, it is a favourite flower of Lord Vishnu, Lord Ganesh and goddess Laxmi. It is also planted near

nuclear energy sites as it is believed it helps to fight off radiation and harness the sun's energy to enhance the performance of the components within the nuclear plant itself.

(v) The 'chrysanthemum', also called autumn daisy, grows particularly during autumn, hence the name. The petals are of white, grey, pink or red in hue, and closely resemble those of the dahlia flower. They are native to east Asia and north eastern Europe. The plant is perennial and herbaceous. The leaves are alternate, divided into leaflets, and may be lobed or serrated /toothed, and are connected to the stalk with a hairy base.

(vi) The 'magnolia grandiflora', also known as bull bay, has white open shaped petals and belong to the family Magnoliaceae. It is native to south North America. In the Indian context, it is called 'champa', 'sone champa', 'him champa', or the 'joy perfume' flower. It has a strong scent and are important ingredients of perfumes and scents. It is also an essential part of religious ceremonies. It symbolises strength, beauty, perseverance, purity, elegance, and the ability to stand challenges and keep going. Its smell closely resembles jasmine or tuberose flowers.

(vii) The 'dahlia' flower plant is a perennial herbaceous plant which is bushy and tuberous. The flower has closely packed cluster of usually pink coloured petals. It is normally native to Mexico and central America, but also widely grown in the sub-continent. It stands for beauty, eternity, inner strength, dignity, kindness and resilience. It is closely related to other flowers such as sunflower, autumn daisy and zinnia.

The other flowers that are also widely employed in making perfumes and scents are the following:

(a) The 'ylang-ylang' is a star shaped yellow flower with large curved petals. It is indigenous to the rainforests of many Asian nations.

(b) The 'neroli' is an extract from the flowers of the bitter orange tree, also known as the Seville orange tree. It has a sweet floral scent with a tinge of citrus fruit.

(c) The 'tuberose' is like lilies as they both have similar fragrances. It is famed for its intoxicating and sweet smell.

(d) The 'peony' , whose botanical name is *Paeonia officinalis*, is a colourful flower native to the temperate climates of Eurasia, northwest Africa and western north America.]

Verse no. 24:

सरितः कुर्वती गाधाः पथश्चाश्यानकर्दमान्

यात्रायै चोदयामास तं शक्तेः प्रथमं शरत्॥ ४-२४

saritaḥ kurvatī gādhāḥ pathaścāśyānakardamān|

yātrāyai codayāmāsa taṁ śakteḥ prathamam śarat|| 4-24

4-24. The season of autumn when rains had stopped and consequentially the volume of water in rivers came down and the roads had become dry and firm as the wet mud and slush had gone away, inspired king Raghu to go on an expedition of conquest, as well as reaffirmation of his authority and sovereignty over the distant areas of his realm.

[Note--Autumn was the season when large armies could move easily. The rainy season was a great problem with slush, rain, dampness and overflowing rivers that created unwarranted hurdles in all respects. Earlier, summer also was a big problem with a blazing sun overhead that created heat and exhausted soldiers. For military expeditions, the best seasons were autumn and winter and up till spring.]

Verse no. 25:

**तस्मै सम्यग्घृतो वह्निर्वाजिनीराजनाविधौ।
प्रदक्षिणार्चिर्व्याजेन हस्तेनेव जयं ददौ॥ ४-२५**

tasmai samyagghuto vahnirvājinīrājanāvidhau|
pradakṣiṇārcirvyājena hasteneva jayaṁ dadau|| 4-25

4-25. When the sacred fire was lit and duly well-fed by offering of oblations during the annual ritual of washing of military arms and war horses (called the 'lustration ceremony'), the tongue of the fire's flame swirled towards the right when the king and his war-horse were going around the fire pit, a ritual called 'circumambulation', which was a good omen, indicating victory for the king in any military campaign he would launch. It was as if the Fire-God himself was encouraging king Raghu to go on a military campaign if he wishes, for he would surely get success.

[Note--In ancient days, when body armour, weapons such as bows and arrows, lances, spears and daggers, as well as war horses were a primary medium for long military campaigns, kings used to interpret various omens and signs of Nature to determine whether or not they would succeed. One such omen is narrated in this verse.]

Verse no. 26:

**स गुप्तमूलप्रत्यन्तः शुद्धपार्ष्णिः रयान्वितः।
षड्विधं बलमादाय प्रतस्थे दिग्जिगीषया॥ ४-२६**

sa guptamūlapratyantaḥ śuddhapārṣṇirayanvitaḥ|
ṣaḍvidhaṁ balamādāya pratasthe digjigīṣayā|| 4-26

4-26. After making proper, secure and secret arrangement for the protection of his fort, city and its population, as well as of the border areas, king Raghu invoked the blessings of gods and deities as he set off on a long military campaign to subdue kings and landlords of hostile lands in all the four directions. He was accompanied by all the six-wings of his army with the intention of bringing all the quarters under his subjection.

[Note--Such long military campaigns to subdue and conquer all hostile kings in all the four directions in ancient times were called 'digvijaya'--the great conquest of all the four directions--east, south, west and north.]

The six-wings or divisions of king Raghu's army consisted of (i) horses (cavalry), (ii) elephants (the elephants corps; elephant units), (iii) infantry (foot soldiers), (iv) war chariots (mobile corps; the chariotry units; manned by archers, spearmen, commanders and the king), (v) the reserve corps, (vi) together with guards at the rear and flanks (to prevent ambush from behind and sides). In this regard, refer also to note of verse no. 30 herein below.

The mechanisms and arrangements to protect the realm were kept 'secret' so that enemies wouldn't be able to breach the security and the protective shield.]

Verse no. 27:

**अवाकिरन्वयोवृद्धास्तं लाजैः पौरयोषितः।
पृषतैर्मन्दरोद्धूतैः क्षीरोर्मय इवाच्युतम्॥ ४-२७**

avākiranvayovṛddhāstaṁ lājaiḥ paurayoṣitaḥ।
prṣatairmandarodbhūtaiḥ kṣīormaya ivācyutam|| 4-27

4-27. Elders of the city sprinkled handfuls of puffed rice on king Raghu as a mark of auspiciousness, blessings and reverence¹, just like the case of Mount Mandrachal worshipping and offering its obeisance to Lord Vishnu when it sprayed the waters of the khirsagar (the celestial ocean of milky water) whose mighty waves lashed against the sides of the mountain, sprang up due to the force of the lashing, and then transformed themselves into a great natural spray consisting of tiny water particles that filled the surroundings. {The Wind-God completed the process by taking the spray to where Lord Vishnu reclined on the coiled back of the celestial serpent called Seshnath.}²

[Note--¹As king Raghu marched out of the city, elders lined on both sides of the street and sprinkled puffed rice on the king and his army as a token of their blessings and a mark of auspiciousness. This sprinkling of puffed rice is part of all religious rituals and regarded as auspicious, such as when the chief patron performs the circumambulation of the sacred fire, or when the bride and groom go around the sacred fire during their marriage ceremony.

²During the churning of the celestial ocean by the gods and the demons in some long past, this very mountain, called Mandrachal, was used as the churning rod. Lord Vishnu has been depicted as resting on the surface of this ocean on a bed made by the coiled body of the celestial serpent called Seshnath. When the waves of this ocean dash violently against the mountain, their kinetic energy lifts them high up against the side of the mountain, and ultimately the water of these waves drop back in the form of a spray consisting of fine water particles that spread in all the directions. The celestial wind then completes the process by carrying the spray to where Lord Vishnu reclines on the coiled body of Seshnath.

Another interpretation is this: During the churning of the celestial ocean when Mt. Mandrachal was used as a churning rod, huge waves were whipped up by the sheer force of the churning. In this tumultuous event, the entire surroundings must have been sprayed

by water particles, but the wind-god ensured that this spray was concentrated to the place where Lord Vishnu was present.]

Verse no. 28:

**स ययौ प्रथमं प्राचीं तुल्यः प्राचीनबर्हिषा
अहिताननिलोद्धतैस्तर्जयन्निव केतुभिः॥ ४-२८**

sa yayau prathamam prācīm tulyaḥ prācīnabarhiṣā|
ahitānaniloddhūtaistarjayanniva ketubhiḥ|| 4-28

4-28. King Raghu, who equalled Indra, the king of heaven, first moved towards the eastern direction. The mere sight of his army's flags fluttering in the wind scared his enemies so much that they felt terrified and lost the courage to challenge his might.

[Note--Kings of smaller kingdoms thought it better to surrender and make a compromise because they knew by experience that a battle is not the worth as they can't win such a huge army with their limited resources. The best way to save face and avoid a blood-bath was to make peace and pay some tribute to king Raghu. Later on we shall read that not all kings surrendered so easily as they fought violently, though of course at the end Raghu won.]

Verse no. 29:

**रजोभिः स्यन्दनोद्धतैर्गजैश्च घनसंनिभैः
भुवस्तलमिव व्योम कुर्वन्व्योमेव भूतलम्॥ ४-२९**

rajobhiḥ syandanoddhūtairgajaiśca ghanasaṁnibhaiḥ|
bhuvastalamiva vyoma kurvanvyomeva bhūtalam|| 4-29

4-29. The chariots of king Raghu's mighty army raised so much dust, and the elephants of his army were so huge that they resembled banks of massive clouds as they marched ahead with great speed, so much so that the sky and the earth seemed to merge with one another as there seemed to be no distinctive line of the horizon as far as the eyes could see.

[Note--The dust raised by the chariots blinded vision and filled the atmosphere, and the huge elephants trumpeting loudly gave the impression that dark banks of clouds are rumbling and thundering loudly as they move rapidly forward. Just as people run to shield themselves from an incoming violent storm that would certainly be accompanied by lashing winds and torrential rains, not to speak of lightening strikes, so was the case with enemies of king Raghu who scoured for cover and scrambled to save themselves from the onslaught of the incoming army.]

Verse no. 30:

प्रतापोऽग्रे ततः शब्दः परागस्तदनन्तरम्।

ययौ पश्चाद्रथादीति चतुःस्कन्धेव सा चमूः॥ ४-३०

pratāpo'gre tataḥ śabdaḥ parāgastadanantaram|
yayau paścādrathādīti catuḥskandheva sā camūḥ|| 4-30

4-30. The fame and reputation of king Raghu as a determined, invincible, brave and courageous warrior went ahead of him to reach his enemies before the actual arrival of him and his army at the spot; this was followed by the sound of the din created by his army as it marched speedily ahead; this was followed by the huge cloud of dust that was raised as the army drew closer to the enemy, and the fourth sign was the actual sight of king Raghu's mighty army with its fluttering flags and shining armour.

All these four signs were symbolic of the four main divisions of king Raghu's invincible army, and these signs terrified his opponents no end.

[Note--In ancient India, the usual fourfold division of an army were (i) the elephants corps with 729 elephants, (ii) 729 chariots, (iii) cavalry with 2187 horses and their riders, and (iv) 3645 infantry men or foot-soldiers. But the poet instead of accepting this fourfold division says 'the prowess of Raghu, which was already well known was one, the second was the din of the approaching large army, the third was the dust raised by the march, and the fourth was the sight of actual army when it was within visible distance'. This would mean that all the four components of the traditional army have been symbolically merged into one entity--the 'army'. The word 'army' thus comprises of all the four components outlined herein above taken together in a collective way.]

Verse no. 31:

मरुपृष्ठान्युदम्भांसि नाव्याः सुप्रतरा नदीः।

विपिनानि प्रकाशानि शक्तिमत्त्वाच्चकार सः॥ ४-३१

marupṛṣṭhānyudambhāmsi nāvyaḥ supatarā nadīḥ|
vipināni prakāśāni śaktimattvāccakāra saḥ|| 4-31

4-31. King Raghu ensured that wherever he went, he spread goodwill by leaving behind a positive legacy of construction, stability, care and rehabilitation (and not destruction, pain and instability as conquerors usually did in ancient times).

Towards this objective, he created ample resources of water in lands that were earlier arid (by digging wells, ponds, public tanks and other kinds of water bodies), made arrangements for easy crossing of rivers that were crossable earlier only by means of boats (by constructing bridges across all such rivers), and made suitable arrangement for lighting forests and paths that passed through them (to enable travellers easy passage across dense forests that were usually dark even during the day-time).

[Note--This strategy served four crucial purposes--(i) One, it helped to endear king Raghu to the local population who had long suffered from these deficiencies, as the local rulers had done nothing to mitigate the problems of their subjects. (ii) Two, the news of these goodwill gestures spread quickly far and wide in the distant lands, so that people welcomed king Raghu and his army with open arms wherever they went, seeing them not as cruel invaders or ruthless conquerors who had come to grab their wealth and exploit them, but as selfless and benevolent benefactors who deserved applause and praise, instead of opposition; (iii) Three, the army of king Raghu itself felt that they are on a noble campaign under a charitable and benevolent king, which in turn made them exceedingly loyal and enthusiastic. (iv) And the main objective of spreading king Raghu's influence, authority and command over all the directions of the land was achieved with very little or no bloodshed.

The kings and lords of far-flung lands also welcomed king Raghu with open hearts and willingly submitted to him as they saw a friend in him instead of a conqueror who had come to usurp their lands and wealth. As Raghu moved ahead in his campaign in alien territories and unknown lands, he met no hostility, but welcome, which obviously helped him achieve success in his objective with minimal cost and collateral damage. Further, the kings and lords of these lands extended cooperation to king Raghu by providing him logistical support, such as provisions of arms, food, chariots, horses, elephants as well as soldiers, help that was very welcome and crucial for success in a far away lands.]

Verse no. 32:

स सेनां महतीं कर्षन्पूर्वसागरगामिनीम्

बभौ हरजटाभ्रष्टां गङ्गामिव भगीरथः॥ ४-३२

sa senām mahatīm karṣanpūrvasāgaragāminīm|

babhau harajaṭābhraṣṭāṁ gaṅgāmiva bhagīrathah|| 4-32

4-32. While leading a vast army towards the eastern shores of the ocean (i.e. the Bay of Bengal), king Raghu resembled king Bhagirath of ancient times who had led the celestial river Ganges towards the east after the river had left the coiled locks of matted hairs on Lord Shiva's head where it had been trapped after descending to earth from heaven. The river followed behind king Bhagirath's chariot as he drove to the eastern shore of the ocean where the ashes of his ancestors lay near the hermitage of sage Kapil.

[Note--Briefly, king Bhagirath had pleased Lord Shiva to release the holy river Ganges so that he can take its stream to the place where the ashes of his ancestors lay scattered near sage Kapil's hermitage in order to give deliverance to their souls. The river followed behind the chariot of king Bhagirath. Details are narrated in canto 3, verse no. 50 of this book 'Raghuvansham'.]

Verse no. 33:

त्याजितैः फलमुत्खातैर्भग्नैश्च बहुधा नृपैः।
तस्यासीदुल्बणो मार्गः पादपैरिव दन्तिनः॥ ४-३३

tyājītaiḥ phalamutkhātairbhagnaiśca bahudhā nrpaiḥ|
tasyāsīdulbaṇo mārgaḥ pādapairiva dantinaḥ|| 4-33

4-33. If any prince or ruler dared to stand against king Raghu and tried to block his path, he was easily vanquished and made to surrender himself as well as his crown before the conqueror, thereby removing all obstacles and clearing the path of conquest of the mighty king Raghu, just like the case of a powerful elephant who would clear all obstacles falling on his way by plucking fruits and felling trees by uprooting them from their roots and throwing them away to clear the path for itself.

[Note--Ordinarily, no prince or ruler stood up against king Raghu as they knew well enough that they don't stand a chance against him, yet there were some who had a false notion of their own ability and strength, and were haughty enough to choose to oppose king Raghu. These princes or rulers faced avoidable humiliation by being forced to surrender.

King Raghu used prudence and wisdom on his path of conquest by choosing from an array of options before him. He would build infrastructure of water resources, bridges and lighting arrangement for travellers passing through dense forests in order to please the local population as well as the ruler. If some prince still dared to challenge him, then king Raghu would use minimum of force to make his opponent surrender, seek some token tribute from the vanquished prince, and restore him to his throne with a promise of remaining under the overall command and control of king Raghu's order. On some occasions, if he determined that the opposing ruler is too stubborn, then he would install another prince from amongst the courtiers or royal family of the concerned kingdom on the throne as the new ruler with the condition that he remains subordinate to king Raghu and follows his commands. In some cases he would install one of his trusted men as the new ruler, or as a governor of the newly acquired territory.

It was just like the case of a powerful elephant employing different means to clear obstacles falling on his path. At some places the elephant would satisfy his hunger by eating fruits and move ahead, at other places he would tear branches of trees, or even uproot the trees altogether and throw them away to clear the path for him.]

Verse no. 34:

पौरस्त्यानेवमाक्रामंस्तांस्ताञ्जनपदाञ्जयी।
प्राप तालीवनश्याममुपकण्ठं महोदधेः॥ ४-३४

paurastyānevamākrāmaṁstāṁstāñjanapadāñjayī|
prāpa tālīvanaśyāmamupakaṇṭhaṁ mahodadheḥ|| 4-34

4-34. In this way, the victorious king Raghu continued to vanquish one kingdom after another lying in the east as he moved in the eastern direction till he reached the edge of the land bordering the dark-coloured waters of eastern ocean, where the coastline was lined by thickets of palm trees.

[Note--By this time, king Raghu had reached the shores of the Bay of Bengal after conquering all the kingdoms of the east. Verse nos. 35-37 herein below would explicitly mention the state of Bengal in present-day India whose kings too surrendered themselves before him.]

Verse no. 35:

अनम्राणां समुद्धर्तुस्तस्मात्सिन्धुरयादिव।
आत्मा संरक्षितः सुहमैर्वृत्तिमाश्रित्य वैतसीम्॥ ४-३५

anamrāṇāṃ samuddhartustasmātsindhurayādiva|
ātmā saṁrakṣitaḥ suhmailrṛttimāśritya vaitasīm|| 4-35

4-35. To save themselves from the onslaught of the invincible conqueror king Raghu who had ruthlessly and relentlessly vanquished stubborn princes who dared to oppose him, the rulers of the Suhma province¹ decided to bow before king Raghua and surrender peacefully before him to avoid bloodshed, just like reeds or cane stalks bow down and lie low before the rising waters of a river during high tide to save themselves from being swept away, and then stand straight again once the tide has ebbed.

[Note--¹In ancient India, the Suhma province was located in the Bengal region of the eastern part of the Indian sub-continent. In modern times, this province covered the districts of Midnapur, Hoogly and Howrah of the state of West Bengal. This province covered a large area of land lying to the west of river Ganges, also known as Bhagirathi in ancient times, and extended southward to the Bay of Bengal.

Other eastern kingdoms that king Raghu conquered were called Anga (the state of Bihar, particularly the districts of Munger and Bhagalpur, as well as the state of Jharkhand that was earlier a part of Bihar, and some border areas of West Bengal), Vanga (or Bengal), Kalinga (present day Odissa), and Pundra (the state of Assam and parts of northern Bangladesh). It is also quite possible that when it is said that king Raghu conquered the entire eastern part of the sub-continent, he may also have vanquished the rulers of Prasuha in the present-day Bangladesh.

These prudent kings thought it wise to keep a low profile and let the invading army pass by lying low and surrendering and paying some tribute in order to avoid complete destruction. Once the so-called storm had passed away, life would return to normal.]

Verse no. 36:

वङ्गानुत्खाय तरसा नेता नौसाधनोद्यतान्
निचखान जयस्तम्भान्गङ्गास्रोतोन्तरेषु सः॥ ४-३६

vaṅgānutkhāya tarasā netā nausādhanodyatān|
nicakhāna jayastambhāngaṅgāsrotontareṣu saḥ|| 4-36

4-36. The princes and rulers of the Vanga province (areas now in the state of West Bengal of India) came with their fleets of warships to oppose king Raghu and block him from crossing the river Ganges from its west bank to the east bank. However, the valiant Raghu gallantly vanquished them and erected his victory pillars on the various islands situated in the stream of the river to mark his conquest of the realm.

[Note--As has been noted earlier in the note appended to verse no. 35 herein above, the Vanga province was situated on the eastern flank of river Ganges in what is now West Bengal state of modern India. On the northern side of this province was what is now southern Bihar that borders Bengal.

Till this point king Raghu had little difficulty in his progress, but this was an alien land and the river Ganges sliced through the land, cutting it into the west and the east territories. This topographical feature necessitated crossing of the river if king Raghu was to continue further east in his quest of conquest. So therefore, in order to reach the other side of the river it is obvious that king Raghu had to cross it, and it was here that all the rulers of the Vanga province collected with their fleets of warships to stop him from landing on the eastern side of the river. But their collective strength crumbled against the might of Raghu's army, and they were all defeated.

To mark his victory over the Vanga province and its rulers, king Raghu erected 'Victory Pillars' in the many islands that dotted the stream of river Ganges, probably at places where his army had battled the opposing armies.]

Verse no. 37:

आपादपद्मप्रणताः कलमा इव ते रघुम्
फलैः संवर्धयामासुरुत्खातप्रतिरोपिताः॥ ४-३७

āpādapadmapraṇatāḥ kalamā iva te raghum|
phalaiḥ saṁvardhayāmāsurutkhātapratiropitāḥ|| 4-37

4-37. The kings and princes of the Vanga province, once defeated, accepted the sovereignty and leadership of king Raghu by bowing before him. The gracious Raghu reinstated them back on their throne, gave their kingdom back to them after accepting tributes and promises of subservience and loyalty on their part.

All the rulers honoured king Raghu (who was now their Emperor) by bowing before him and offering him immense wealth brought from different parts of their province where they ruled, just like farmers from different parts of a great kingdom willingly bring rice and other kinds of crops grown by them in their fields, and offer them

to their king as a tribute, gift, annual rent or land revenue or tax on agricultural land that they owe to their lord. {It is called 'Lagaan' in Hindi.}

[Note--The farmers too would stand in line, and when they approach the king they would first bow before him and then offer the king whatever yield of their fields they had brought as a tribute, gift or annual land revenue that they owe to the king.

When the kings, princes and lands of all the small and big kingdoms of the region known as Vanga province lying on the eastern flanks of river Ganges agreed to surrender before king Raghu, he reinstated them on their thrones, and in return they brought costly gifts and a lot of wealth to king Raghu as tributes paid by them to their conqueror in accordance with their abilities. It was expected of them that they would all pay an annual tribute to king Raghu, for which some sort of formal agreements were made.]

Verse no. 38:

स तीर्त्वा कपिशां सैन्यैर्बद्धदिवरदसेतुभिः।

उत्कलादर्शितपथः कलिङ्गाभिमुखो ययौ॥ ४-३८

sa tīrtvā kapiśāṁ sainyairbaddhadviradasetubhiḥ|
utkalādarśitapathaḥ kalingābhimukho yayau|| 4-38

4-38. To proceed ahead on his military campaign to conquer all the four directions of the land, called 'Dig-Vijaya-Yatra', or the 'great journey of conquest', king Raghu, after conquering the Vanga province, bent his course and turned towards south where the Utkal province was located. The kings of that place easily submitted without resistance. They even showed king Raghu the direction towards the Kalinga province. For onward journey, he had to cross river Kapisha, and for this purpose he used the elephants of his army by making them stand in tight formation to form a makeshift bridge across the river so that his army could get over to the other side by riding over it. {Once the entire army had crossed over, the elephant corps joined it and moved along with it towards the next destination.}

[Note--The 'Utkal' province lay to the south of the Vanga province and on the eastern coastline of India, and was what is now known as the state of Odissa. It lay in the Mahanadi river delta.

Further south of it along the eastern coastline was the province of 'Kaling', which in today's India covered the south of Odissa, the northern parts of the state of Andhra Pradesh. It lied between rivers Mahanadi and Godavari. Kalinga is famous in history as the site of the great war fought by emperor Ashok where he felt so disgusted and remorseful after seeing bloodshed at a colossal level that he embraced the principles of non-violence in future, and adopted Buddhism as state religion.

The 'Kapisha' river was present between Bengal and Odissa. It is also called Kansabati river of eastern India. The fact that elephants could stand side-by-side on its bed obviously means that the river was shallow and not deep. These elephants were temporarily tied together and wooden planks were placed on their backs to form a bridge

across the river. Once the army was on the other side, the elephants were untied and allowed to join the army in its march ahead.

This episode shows how kings used wit and wisdom to overcome obstacles with whatever resources were available to them while on a long campaign in a foreign land.]

Verse no. 39:

स प्रतापं महेन्द्रस्य मूर्ध्नि तीक्ष्णं न्यवेशयत्
अङ्कुशं द्विरदस्येव यन्ता गम्भीरवेदिनः॥ ४-३९

sa pratāpaṁ mahendrasya mūrdhni tīkṣṇaṁ nyaveśayat|
aṅkuśaṁ dviradasyeva yantā gambhīravedinaḥ|| 4-39

4-39. In the province of Kalinga which he had conquered, king Raghu established his authority by erecting a majestic victory pillar on the top of Mt. Mahendra¹, the highest mountain of the region, to mark his glorious achievement, just like an elephant tamer uses a sharp goad that he pierces vertically on the head of a wild and reckless elephant that refuses to yield to milder forms of force, irrespective of whether such stabbing by the goad would tear the skin on the elephant's head and cause grave injury to the animal².

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 41 herein below.

²This analogy shows that the king of Kalinga had stubbornly refused to yield, and therefore a powerful force and a fierce battle had to be employed to vanquish him. The establishment of a giant victory post on the summit of Mt. Mahendra was symbolic of the great victory that king Raghu had achieved. The highest summit was selected to imply that both Utkal and Kalinga provinces were now subjects of king Raghu as this mountain chain extended as far as Utkal region. The Mahendra mountain chain lies in the Eastern Ghats of India. According to the story of the Ramayana, sage Parashuram had his hermitage here. This mountain is associated with Lord Shiva too.

King Raghu was forced to use harsh force because the ruler of Kalinga refused to yield, just like the case of the elephant tamer who is compelled to dig the sharp goad on the head of the elephant because the latter refuses to obey his commands.

The following verse no. 40 clearly shows how fiercely the king of Kalinga fought, and refused to surrender before Raghu without a fight.]

Verse no. 40:

प्रतिजग्राह कालिङ्गस्तमस्त्रैर्गजसाधनः|
पक्षच्छेदोद्यतं शक्रं शिलावर्षीव पर्वतः॥ ४-४०

pratijagrāha kāliṅgastamastrairgajasādhanaḥ|
pakṣacchedodyataṁ śakraṁ śilāvarṣīva parvataḥ|| 4-40

4-40. Just as in some ancient time the flying mountains had fearlessly pelted rocks and boulders at Indra (the king of heaven) when he tried to cut-off the mountains' wings to ground them, so was the case with the king of Kalinga who lined up his war elephants and stood firmly against the attempt of king Raghu to subjugate him and pass through his kingdom.

{But unfortunately, as was the case of Indra finally succeeding in cutting off the wings of the flying mountains with his weapon called Vajra inspite of the mountains' fierce opposition to Indra's attempt to stop them from flying and blocking his way and other gods path in the sky, so was the case of king Raghu who succeeded in vanquishing the king of Kalinga though the latter fought bravely and gallantly with the former to retain his independence and stop his progress through his dominion.}

[Note--According to Hindu mythology, ancient mountains had the ability to fly, which caused chaos and fear in heaven as well as earth because they would obstruct the flying path of birds and chariots of gods in the sky, and fell anywhere they pleased to crush people and cause widespread destruction on earth. So therefore, Indra decided to cut-off their wings by striking them with his Vajra, the thunderbolt, to ground them. During this face-off, both used their own weapons, Indra his Vajra and the mountains their rocks and boulders. The only exception was Mt. Mainak which escaped Indra's weapon by diving into the sea and hiding there. It was this Mainak that was instructed by the deity of the ocean to rise up to the surface so that Hanuman could take some rest when he was going to Lanka in search of Sita--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no.1 along with Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes it.]

Verse no. 41:

**द्विषां विषह्य काकुत्स्थस्तत्र नाराचदुर्दिनम्।
सन्मङ्गलस्नात इव प्रतिपेदे जयश्रियम्॥ ४-४१**

dviṣāṃ viṣahya kākutsthastatra nārācadurdinam|
sanmaṅgalasnāta iva pratipede jayaśriyam || 4-41

4-41. The brave, valiant and determined king Raghu, a descendant of king Kakutstha¹, stood resolutely on Mt. Mahendra² as his enemy showered a hail of arrows upon him. Raghu remained undaunted by the ferocity of the attack, and this bravery of his unsettled the king of Kalinga who yielded to his army and surrendered. In this way, king Raghu acquired the crown of victory along with all the attendant honours and fame that accompany such landmark conquests.

This shower of arrows that covered him from all the sides was a symbolic raining of hail-stones representing flowers that were showered upon him by the deity of victory, called Vijaya Laxmi, to applaud him for his bravery and resilience that culminated in his victory over a powerful enemy, the king of Kalinga.

[Note--¹King Kakutstha was an ancient king of the Ikswaku dynasty, also called the Solar Race, that ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya. He was the grandson of Ikswaku. King

Raghu belonged to this dynasty. Later on, Lord Ram, the hero of the story of the Ramayana, too was born in this Solar Race.

²The spot where king Raghu stood and tolerated the arrows showered upon him by the king of Kalinga before the latter surrendered before him was the spot where Raghu erected a Victory Pillar as mentioned in verse no. 39 herein above.

King Raghu chose this high point to observe the battle unfolding on the ground below as he got a bird's eye view of what was happening on the battle-field. So when his army won the battle, he raised a Victory Pillar there.]

Verse no. 42:

ताम्बुलीनां दलैस्तत्र रचितापानभूमयः।

नारिकेलासवं योधाः शात्रवं च पपुर्यशः॥ ४-४२

tāmbulīnāṃ dalaistatra racitāpānabhūmayah।

nārikelāsavaṃ yodhāḥ śātravaṃ ca papuryaśaḥ || 4-42

4-42. To celebrate this victory, the soldiers collected around their king Raghu on Mt. Mahandra, and drank coconut water in improvised cups made from betel leaves in a mass celebration. By this act, they literally drank or gulped down the glory of their enemy, the king of Kalinga.

[Note--In the wild forest where a lion fights other animals and succeeds in subduing them, he would grab one or two of his victims, dash the latter to the ground, mount over it, tear apart its body, and drink the prey's blood and chew its flesh to mark his victory over the enemy. Likewise, the soldiers of Raghu's army broke open coconuts shells and poured their contents, the coconut water, into cups made of betel leaves to drink the sweet liquid to mark their victory over the enemy. As for chewing, the soft pulp of the coconut was used once its water was drunk. Coconut trees were found in abundance in the coastal regions of the Indian sub-continent--refer: verse no. 34 herein above.]

Verse no. 43:

गृहीतप्रतिमुक्तस्य स धर्मविजयी नृपः।

श्रियं महेन्द्रनाथस्य जहार न तु मेदिनीम्॥ ४-४३

grhītapratimuktasya sa dharmavijayī nrpaḥ।

śriyaṃ mahendranāthasya jahāra na tu medinīm || 4-43

4-43. King Raghu always stood for the principles of Dharma that taught him not to be too harsh upon his opponent or kill him when the latter has been vanquished, because the opposing king was also carrying out his duties of not letting anyone interfere in his affairs for no fault of his, and to resist attempt to dominate his kingdom, snatch his

independence, and undermine his sovereignty without him causing any harm to the king of the invading army, or instigating the conqueror by insulting him.

So therefore, after vanquishing the king of Kalinga in whose domain Mt. Mahendra fell, king Raghu restored the former to his throne. It means Raghu took away the pride and honour of the king of Kalinga by accepting a token tribute of wealth from him, but that was all and no other coercive actions were taken, such as to dethrone him or completely usurp his dominion.

{This noble gesture was the hallmark of Raghu's military campaigns. And it was this attitude that made him famous down the annals of ancient history.}

[Note--The conquering king just accepting some wealth as tribute from the conquered king, and sparing the latter's life and restoring him back to his throne--is called Dharma.]

Verse no. 44:

**ततो वेलातटेनैव फलवत्पूगमालिना
अगस्त्याचरितामाशामनाशास्यजयो ययौ॥ ४-४४**

tato velātaṭenaiva phalavatpūgamālinā |
agastyācaritāmāśāmanāśāsyaajayo yayau || 4-44

4-44. After having achieved stellar success in conquering the eastern states, king Raghu thence proceeded further south along the shore of the ocean through realms that had dense forests of betel nut trees (areca nuts) and their fruits, towards the direction where sage Agastya had his hermitage (i.e. the southern part of the Indian peninsula).

[Note--Sage Agastya had his hermitage on the banks of river Godavari in the Dandakaaranya forest.]

Verse no. 45:

**स सैन्यपरिभोगेण गजदानसुगन्धिना
कावेरीं सरितां पत्युः शङ्कनीयामिवाकरोत्॥ ४-४५**

sa sainyaparibhogeṇa gajadānasugandhinā |
kāverīm saritām patyuh śaṅkanīyāmivākarot || 4-45

4-45. When the army of king Raghu reached river Kaveri (further south from the area served by the Godavari river where sage Agastya had his hermitage), his soldiers and elephants had a merry time enjoying a bath in the waters of that river, so much so that the strong aroma of the secretions from the glands of elephants, known as 'ichor', along with the bodily smell of the soldiers which their sweats carried, got infused into the waters of the river Kaveri when they took a bath in it. When this water ultimately reached the

southern ocean, it carried the smell with it, which in turn made the deity of the ocean suspicious of the integrity and chastity of the deity of the river.

[Note--In ancient folklore, the deity of the southern ocean is regarded as the husband of the deity of river Kaveri. So, when Kaveri reached her so-called symbolic husband, the deity of the southern ocean, the latter got suspicious of her because she bore the smell of the ichor from the elephants and the bodily smell of the soldiers of the army of king Raghu who had taken bath in its waters. The deity of the southern ocean thought that the deity of Kaveri river has had a close physical contact with some other deity, and had consequentially imported the latter's smell into her own self, which she now brought to the deity of the southern ocean, the latter deity being her true husband in a symbolic manner. It is because river Kaveri enters the southern ocean after its journey overland, just like a lady returning home to her husband at the end of the day's work.

Kaveri is a major southern river, and is the third largest after Godavari and Krishna river. It starts at the Brahmagiri range in the Western Ghats in the present day state of Karnataka, and ends in the Bay of Bengal at Karaikal just before the Indian Ocean starts. In south India, the deity of Kaveri is worshipped as 'Goddess Kaveri'. In ancient times, it was called Ponni, meaning the 'golden one'. It is considered as holy as river Ganges of north India, and often called 'dakshin ganga', or the 'Southern Ganges'. It forms a delta before merging with the ocean.]

Verse no. 46:

**बलैरध्युषितास्तस्य विजिगीषोर्गतध्वनः।
मारीचोद्भ्रान्तहारीता मलयाद्रेरुपत्यकाः॥ ४-४६**

balairadhyuṣitāstasya vijigīṣorgatadhvanah|
māricodbhrāntahārītā malayādrerupatyakāḥ || 4-46

4-46. Moving further ahead with a desire to expand its conquest to newer territories, the army of king Raghu travelled all the way to the foothills of Mt. Malaya where they pitched their camps. This land was covered by forests of black-and-green pepper (capsicum) trees over which green-winged birds (i.e. parrots) fluttered in large numbers.

[Note--Mt. Malaya where the army of king pitched its camp is situated in the southern edge of the Western Ghats where it extends to meet the southern tip of the Indian peninsula at cape Comorin in the state of Tamil Nadu in modern India, and extends to parts of Kerala on the south-western part of India.

Like the mountains of the northern Himalaya range are collectively called by that name, the hills of the Western Ghats extending southwards from the borders of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu states of modern India were collectively called Mt. Malaya. Parrots are very fond of seeds of green chilli pods--that is why parrots were found in abundance at the particular place where king Raghu's army pitched its camp, i.e. at the southern-most tip of this chain of hills where the Western Ghats meet the southern tip of the Indian peninsula. The forests here have pepper and cardamom as well as sandalwood trees.

Whereas the pepper trees have already been mentioned in this verse, the next two verse nos. 47 and 48 refer to the cardamom and sandalwood trees too. This detailed narration of the kind of trees found in the southern-most part of the Indian peninsula shows that the poet Kalidas had a wide knowledge of geography too besides his knowledge of ancient history.

By corollary it means that the army had reached the southern edge of the Indian sub-continent.]

Verse no. 47:

**ससञ्जुरश्वक्षुण्णानमेलानामुत्पतिष्णवः।
तुल्यगन्धिषु मत्तेभक्तेषु फलरेणवः॥ ४-४७**

sasañjuraśvākṣuṇṇānamelānām utpatiṣṇavaḥ |
tulyagandhiṣu mattebhakṭeṣu phalareṇavaḥ || 4-47

4-47. The particles of crushed seeds of cardamom flew in the air when they were pounded by the hooves of the horses of the marching army and stuck to the sweats on the heads of the elephants who were already discharging the scented ichor from their sweat glands located around their temples. The elephants became furious by the combined effect of the smell of the ichor and the cardamom.

[Note--This part of the land had two types of trees--pepper and cardamom. The previous verse no. 46 has already mentioned pepper. Now, when the dust kicked up by the hooves of horses reached the trunks of the elephants and they inhaled it, the fine grounded particles of both pepper and cardamom reached their heads, and the combined irritating effect of pepper and cardamom particles, along with the smell of their own ichor, made the elephants mad and furious.]

Verse no. 48:

**भोगिवेष्टनमार्गेषु चन्दनानां समर्पितम्।
नास्रसत्करिणां ग्रैवं त्रिपदीच्छेदिनामपि॥ ४-४८**

bhogiveṣṭanamārgēṣu candanānām samarpitam |
nāsrasatkariṇām graivam tripadīcchedināmapi || 4-48

4-48. Even though these elephants were so powerful and strong that they would break free from the chains that tied them to the trunks of the sandalwood trees over which serpents hang like so many ropes, yet these same elephants were not able to break free from the restricting girdle placed around their necks by their riders.

[Note--The third type of tree that is found in these parts of the land is the sandalwood tree. The two other types are the pepper and the cardamom trees. Sandalwood trees

emanate a sweet smell that attracts serpents who wrap themselves all around it. Just as the sandalwood tree is not able to free itself from the shackle of these serpents by any means, so was the case with the elephants of king Raghu's army as these elephants, however mad and furious they may have been, were not able to break free from the restricting girdles put around their necks by their tamers and riders to prevent them from running amok.

In this analogy, the tree trunks and branches of the sandalwood tree is compared to the limbs and thick necks of the elephants, while the serpents wrapping themselves around the trees are likened to the ropes that were wrapped around the elephants' necks and limbs to control them.]

Verse no. 49:

**दिशि मन्दायते तेजो दक्षिणस्यां रवेरपि।
तस्यामेव रघोः पाण्ड्याः प्रतापं न विषेहिरे ॥ ४-४९**

diśi mandāyate tejo dakṣiṇasyāṁ raverapi।
tasyāmeva raghoḥ pāṇḍyāḥ pratāpaṁ na viṣehire || 4-49

4-49. The famous Pandaya kings of the south were very powerful and strong so much so that even the sun lost its glory (shine; resplendence) as compared to these kings when it was in the southern solstice. But even they were no match against the might of king Raghu (and therefore decided to surrender).

[Note--The Pandaya king had ruled the south of India, in the present day state of Tamil Nadu, parts of Kerala and even extended their territories to northern parts of Sri Lanka across the ocean from the mainland's southern tip. Their centre of authority was located in the heart of Tamil Nadu, but they extended their influence to the areas of central and southern Kerala and as further as the northern half of the island of Sri Lanka. According to modern historians, they ruled from roughly the 3rd century BCE till the 15th century.

At this juncture, it would be pertinent to note that the story which Kalidas is narrating here, i.e. the story of king Raghu, relates to the era of the Ramayana which dates back to many centuries before the age assigned to the Pandaya kings by modern historians. The point is that Kalidas has cited the rule of the Pandaya kings to give an idea of the area in which king Raghu was present at that time. It is always possible that the dynasty of the Pandayas had their roots in some distant past just like the case of the Ikswaku race, or the Solar race to which Raghu belonged, which traces its origin to Manu dating back to the start of civilisation and the beginning of human population on earth.

In the southern hemisphere, the summer solstice or the southern solstice occurs around December 21 when the sun is above the Tropic of Capricorn. During this phase, the sun's light is the lowest and the days are the shortest in the year. Since the Pandaya rulers were established in the southern half the sub-continent, hence this parallel is being drawn with the sun losing its sunshine and energy (or glory) when it symbolically reaches the territories of the 'south' where the Pandaya kings had their influence during its passage through the 'southern' solstice.

The next verse no. 50 clearly states that these kings bowed before king Raghu and offered him rich gifts as tribute--which indicates that they had not confronted Raghu like the king of Kalinga had done.]

Verse no. 50:

ताम्रपर्णीसमेतस्य मुक्तासारं महादधेः।
ते निपत्य ददुस्तस्मै यशः स्वमिव संचितम्॥ ४-५०

tāmrparṇīsametasya muktāsāraṁ mahādadheḥ|
te nipatyā dadustasmai yaśaḥ svamiva saṁcitam || 4-50

4-50. The kings of the Pandaya race bowed before king Raghu and gifted him priceless pearls which they had gathered from the southern ocean as well as the river Tamraparni flowing through their territories.

[Note--In ancient India, the Tamraparni river was also called Thamirabarani river or the Porunai river. It originated in Pothigai hills in the Western Ghats and flowing through the modern state of Tamil Nadu, finally emptying into the gulf of Mannar. Mention of this river clearly and specifically indicates the location of king Raghu at that point of time during his campaign.]

Verse nos. 51-52:

स निर्विश्य यथाकामं तटेष्वालीनचन्दनौ।
स्तनाविव दिशस्तस्याः शैलौ मलयदर्दुरौ॥ ४-५१

असह्यविक्रमः सहयं दूरान्मुक्तमुदन्वता।
नितम्बमिव मेदिन्याः सस्तांशुकमलङ्घयत्॥ ४-५२

sa nirviśya yathākāmaṁ taṭeṣvālīnacandanau|
stanāviva diśastasyāḥ śailau malayadardurau || 4-51

asahyavikramaḥ sahyam dūrānmuktamudanvatā|
nitambamiva medinyāḥ sraṣṭāṁśukamalaṅghayat || 4-52

Verse nos. 51-52. After halting for a while to take some rest on the top of two southern mountains, Mt. Malaya and Mt. Dardur, whose summits were like the breasts of a maiden and whose sides were covered with forests of sandalwood trees as if the maiden had draped herself with a body-wrapping garment made of these trees, the valiant and invincible king Raghu and his army crossed the lofty ranges of the Sahaya mountain to reach the other side of the earth that lay beyond it as if the king decided to explore more

about what lay beyond the maiden's bosom towards the upper side of her torso, towards her neck and head.

The land beyond the Sahaya mountain was far away from the ocean of the south as if the maiden had pushed the deity of the ocean away from her towards the south in a symbolic way as king Raghu marched steadily away from the south towards the north, resulting in the ocean progressively receding and moving away from him as he proceeded towards the north of the Sahya mountain.

[Note--We must always keep in mind that Kalidas was a 'poet' and not an ordinary author or historian, and like all great poets he had let his fertile imagination fly free to visualise things and describe them by liberal use analogies, similes, metaphors, idioms, allegories and imagery to vividly describe such things and events that would not have been possible by an ordinary, bland narrative, no matter how detailed that narration may have been. These different tools of speech helped the skilled poet to vividly bring out different aspects and nuances of the scene he was describing by using very few words and phrases, but making them full of life and colour by employing his poetic and linguistic skills.

This verse is a good example of it. Here he has compared the two summits of the mountains to the breast of a maiden, and the sandalwood-tree covered sides of these mountains to the body-wrapping garment, called a 'sari', of the maiden. From afar, the ground below the trees is not visible in the forest because of the density of the trees and their foliage and flowers, but when one actually enters these forests the ground is clearly visible. So likewise, from a distant the lady seems to be well wrapped-up in a garment that has a scented perfume of sandalwood sprayed over it, but when one gets closer, her skin is clearly visible below it. It sounds erotic, but that was not the intention of Kalidas, for he wanted to paint the picture of exotic lands with a colourful paint made of words.

The land in the south had ocean on three of its side, east, south and west as if the deity of the ocean was girdling the deity of the earth and keeping the latter within its embrace. But the deity of the earth got fed up with this constant embrace by the deity of the ocean, and therefore the former pushed off the latter away further towards south.

After conquering the east and the south, king Raghu now turned his attention towards the western coast and up towards the north-west quarter of the Indian sub-continent so that in due course of time when he would reach his kingdom's capital city of Ayodhya, he would have completed the circle of conquest which he had started by going first in the eastern direction as far as the north-east, then turned downwards and proceeded along the east coast, thence moved on to the extreme south, thence turned northwards to proceed along the west coast, from there went upto to the north-west, and finally ended his journey from where he had started, i.e. at Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 53:

तस्यानीकैर्विसर्पद्विरपरान्तजयोद्यतैः।

रामास्त्रोत्सारितोऽप्यासीत्सहयलग्न इवार्णवः ॥ ४-५३

tasyānikairvisarpadbhiraparāntajayodyataih।
rāmāstrotsārito'pyāsītsahyalagna ivārṇavaḥ || 4-53

4-53. As the vast army of king Raghu moved ahead along the western coast from the south of the peninsula and was in close proximity with the Sahaya mountain as it was crossing it (refer verse nos. 51-52 herein above), it stretched so far backwards towards the southern ocean that for an observer it appeared to link the mountain to the ocean which had been pushed far away to the south in some ancient time by the arrow of sage Parashuram¹.

[Note--¹In some ancient time, sage Parashuram had pushed the southern ocean back to its present position beyond the mountains of Malaya and Dardur because the sage was annoyed at it for continuously disturbing his penance by advancing upwards as far as Mt. Mahendra where his hermitage was situated.

According to another account, Parashuram pushed the ocean to the south, specifically along the southern and western coast of India to reclaim land for his hermitage and to establish the Brahmin who were displaced by Kshatriya kings.

The story goes that after slaying a lot many Kshatriya kings, sage Parashuram was filled with regret, and to offset his sins he undertook to do severe penance and meditation to clean himself of guilt and sin. For this, he stood on the Western Ghats (around the present day states of Maharashtra or Goa) and ordered the ocean to retreat. When the deity of the ocean refused, the angry sage threw his battle-axe or shot his arrow at the ocean, forcing the latter to retreat till the point the sage's weapon fell on the ground. The land that was thus cleared of salty ocean water was called 'Parashuram Kshetra', which is now known as the Konkan area, stretching along the western coast, the Western Ghats, right from Maharashtra to the Kerala region.

Since it was previously a salty and uninhabitable land, so Parashuram prayed to the serpent god, called 'Vasuki', who sprayed poison on this land, turning it into a fertile, lush green area. This reclaimed land he then gifted to Brahmins as part of his religious ritual when alms and donations were to be given to Brahmins in order to complete the ritual.]

Verse no. 54:

भयोत्सृष्टविभूषाणां तेन केरलयोषिताम्

अलकेषु चमूरेणुश्चूर्णप्रतिनिधीकृतः॥ ४-५४

bhayotsrṣṭavibhūṣāṇāṃ tena keralayoṣitām|
alakeṣu camūreṇuścūrṇapratinidhīkṛtaḥ || 4-54

4-54. As the women folk of the kingdoms of Kerala region threw away their ornaments and fled with dishevelled hairs out of fear of the incoming army of King Raghu, the king however restored their dignity in a symbolic manner when the red dust kicked up by his marching army was sprayed on the curly hairs of these ladies like the scented red vermillion powder they would have normally applied on their hairs as part of their daily routine of hairdo.

[Note--Ladies apply red vermillion powder, often having some kind of scent, usually sandalwood scent, on their heads as a mark of dignity, self-respect and honour. This powder is either used dry or as a paste, and applied along the centre of the head from the middle of the hairline on the forehead to the top of the skull. When in distress or when in a hurry to flee from an aggressive attacker, the alarmed ladies run helter-skelter to save themselves from losing their chastity and honour, and in the hurry to escape they do not pay attention to their jewellery or bother about the red vermillion powder. The urgency of how the women folk of Kerala region reacted when the news of the arrival of king Raghu's army reached them is depicted by saying that they had their hairs dishevelled, they had discarded their ornaments, and they didn't bother to apply vermillion powder on their foreheads and hairs in a hurry to flee.

The poet Kalidas says that king Raghu restored their honour by symbolically spraying the red dust kicked up from the ground by his marching army on the hairs of these women folk, thereby symbolically restoring their honour and dignity even without touching them physically.]

Verse no. 55:

मुरलामारुतोद्धृतमगमत्कैतकं रजः|

तद्योधवारबाणानामयत्नपटवासताम्॥ ४-५५

muralāmārutoddhūtamagamatkaitakam rajah|

tadyodhavārabaṇānāmayatnapaṭavāsatām || 4-55

4-55. The scented pollen of the ketaki flowers ('kaitakam'; i.e. Kewara / Kewda / Kevda flower; the fragrant Screw Pine) that were carried by the soft breeze blowing in from the river Murla (Muralaa; 'muralā') were sprayed on the shields of king Raghu and his soldiers, making them appear as if some perfume had been purposely sprayed on them (as an honour being bestowed upon a victorious army and its general by mother Nature).

[Note--The Kewara or Kevda flower, known as the fragrant Screw Pine, has sweet, rose like fragrance. It is native to coastal India and South Asia, and its essential oils are extracted from the male flower and used as perfume. As the breeze from the river blew in, it carried with it the pollen from these flowers which got deposited on the shields of the king and his soldiers.

The Murla river is located on the Western Ghats in Maharashtra in the Vidharbha region. It originates near Ahmednagar and merges with Mutha river to form the Mula-Matha river which is located near the city of Pune in Maharashtra. There is another river of the same name, called Maru river, in eastern Maharashtra's Vidharbha region, flowing through Nagpur and Bhandara districts, and empties in the Gose Khurd Dam.

This means that the army of king Raghu had by this time reached the present day state of Maharashtra situated along the western ocean, i.e. the Arabian Sea.]

Verse no. 56:

अभ्यभूयत वाहानां चरतां गात्रशिञ्जितैः।
वर्मभिः पवनोद्धतराजतालीवनध्वनिः॥ ४-५६

abhyabhūyata vāhānāṁ caratām gātraśiñjitaiḥ।
varmabhiḥ pavanoddhūtarājatālīvanadhvaniḥ || 4-56

4-56. The clamour caused by the rattling sound of armour and shield of the horses of king Raghu's army on the march drowned the rustling sound made by movement of magnificent palm trees as they swayed majestically in the wind.

[Note--One would notice how the poet has paid attention to small details--such as this example where the sound of the rustling palm trees got muffled and drowned under the din created by the rattling and clamouring of arms of the marching army.]

Verse no. 57:

खर्जूरीस्कन्धनद्धानां मदोद्गारसुगन्धिषु।
कटेषु करिणां पेतुः पुंनागेभ्यः शिलीमुखाः॥ ४-५७

kharjūrīskandhanaddhānāṁ madodgārasugandhiṣu।
kaṭeṣu kariṇāṁ petuḥ puṁnāgebhyaḥ śilīmukhāḥ || 4-57

4-57. Lured by the scent of the ichor oozing from the temples of the elephants of king Raghu's army that were tied to the date-palm trees when the army pitched camp for some rest, the honey bees left hovering over the flowers of the naag-kesar plant¹ as was their natural habit, and instead drove in large numbers towards these elephants to hover over and settle on the temples of the elephants so that they can enjoy the taste and the fragrance of the ichor, something which they found exotic and a novelty, a break from the boring daily routine of the same fragrance of the naag-kesar plant.

[Note--¹The 'naag-kesar' plant is known as Mesua ferrea plant. It is also called Indian Rose, Chestnut, Cobra Saffron, Naag-Champa, or Ironwood plant. It is found in the rainforests of river valleys on the eastern and western ghats of peninsular India. It is famed for its white fragrant flowers, and is used for ornamental purposes. Its an evergreen tree growing upto 30 meters with dark green trees. The flowers are white with yellow stamens. Bees are attracted in large swarms by the fragrance of the flowers and hover over it to drink its nectar. In this particular case, when the elephants of king Raghu's army were tied to the trunks of the date-palm trees, the bees got distracted from their natural source of fragrance of these flowers, and instead turned their attention to the fragrance of the ichor exuded by the glands on the temples of the elephants as this was a novelty for them and an interesting break from their daily routine.]

Verse no. 58:

अवकाशं किलोदन्वान् रामायाभ्यर्थितो ददौ।
अपरान्तमहीपालव्याजेन रघवे करम्॥ ४-५८

avakāśaṁ kilodanvān rāmāyābhyarthito dadau|
aparāntamahīpālavyājena raghave karam || 4-58

4-58. The ocean had gifted land to sage Parashuram on demand in some ancient time¹, the same ocean now gave tax to king Raghu by way of gifts and tributes that the kings having their domains on its (ocean's) western coast gave to the victorious king.

[Note--¹Refer to note of verse no. 53 herein above where this story is the ocean ceding land to sage Parashuram has been narrated in detail. In the context of this verse, the gifts and tributes that the conquered kings of the Western Ghats and adjacent territories lying along the west coast gave to the victorious king Raghu was symbolically a form of tax that the deity of the ocean gave to Raghu when he demanded surrender of these kings, and spared them and their lands when they yielded to him and pleased him by abundance of gifts and tributes.

The deity of the ocean quietly threatened these kings that if they did not obey him and gave tax to king Raghu on his behalf, then he (the deity) would order the ocean to rise and sink their lands.]

Verse no. 59:

मत्तेभरदनोत्कीर्णव्यक्तविक्रमलक्षणम्।
त्रिकूटमेव तत्रोच्चैर्जयस्तम्भं चकार सः॥ ४-५९

mattebharadanotkīrṇavyaktavikramalakṣaṇam|
trikūṭameva tatrocchairjayastambhaṁ cakāra saḥ || 4-59

4-59. The elephants of king Raghu's army furiously dug their long, strong and pointed tusks into the sides and summits of the mountains and hills of Mt. Trikoot¹, creating large cracks and deep holes. So, king Raghu did not erect any special distinctive landmark such as victory pillars or arches in this area to mark his conquest, because the marks left by the elephants of his army served the same purpose.

[Note--¹The Trikoot mountain is also known as the Nilgiri hills, a mountain range in the Western Ghats at the tri-junction of the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. The word 'Trikoot' perhaps refers to this 'tri-junction', because the word 'tri' means three, and 'koot' means the summit of a chain of hills.]

Verse no. 60:

पारसीकांस्ततो जेतुं प्रतस्थे स्थलवर्त्मना।
इन्द्रियाख्यानिव रिपूंस्तत्त्वज्ञानेन संयमी॥ ४-६०

pārasīkāṁstato jetuṁ pratasthe sthalavartmanā।
indriyākhyāniva ripūṁstattvajñānena saṁyamī || 4-60

4-60. Just like ascetics do meditation to focus their attention on conquering their sense organs and bringing them under control, so likewise king Raghu now changed his course and marched overland towards the far north-west as he focused his attention to conquer the land of the Paarsi kings and bring them under his authority.

[Note--The area of the Paarsi kings in ancient times was in and around the Persian countries, known as Persia, and which corresponded to the present day Iran. It was also called the 'Land of the Arayans'. It was situated in the Persian Gulf region, beyond the present day Afghanistan.

Ascetics turn their attention away from everything else and focus their mind to self-control by the means of meditation which entails dedication and focus. Likewise, king Raghu turned his sight towards the far north-western land of the Paarsi kings, and with a singular focus of bringing them under his authority, he changed course and headed overland in that direction by crossing the territories that fell on his way. The special mention of the 'overland route' is to stress that Raghu preferred to march his army on the ground by crossing Afghanistan and into Persia, instead of going by the sea route via the Gulf of Persia.

Just as an ascetic is not disturbed by anything else once he decides to reach a particular spiritual goal, so was the case with king Raghu that once he decided to gain control over the Persian lands, there was no stopping him.]

Verse no. 61:

यवनीमुखपद्मानां सेहे मधुमदं न सः।
बालातपमिवाब्जानामकालजलदोदयः ॥ ४-६१

yavanīmukhapadmānām sehe madhumadam na saḥ।
bālātapamivābjānāmakālajaladodayaḥ || 4-61

4-61. Just as an untimely dark cloud rising in the eastern horizon would obstruct the sunlight from falling on newly opened petals of lotus flowers in the morning and cause the flowers to close up once again, so likewise the arrival of the huge army of king Raghu in the lands of the Persian kings instilled so much terror in the women folk of the land that their faces, which were flushing with a pink hue till then because of the wine they had been drinking, suddenly lost their colour, and made their pretty lotus-like faces look pale and pallid in contrast (as if all their blood had suddenly drained off out of fear).

[Note-- The reader will not fail to note the fantastic comparison of the clouds rising up to cover the sun's light in the early hours of the day, which obviously refers to the eastern direction of the horizon where the sun rises, and the eastern direction of the horizon from where the army of king Raghu approached the land of the Paarsi kings.

The lotus flower opens its petals and blooms when the sunlight falls on it in the morning hours. But as soon as this sunlight is obstructed by the bank of dark clouds rising in the eastern horizon where the sun was also rising, the lotus shrinks and closes its petals. Since the army of king Raghu was coming in from the eastern direction, this analogy fits in well with the analogy of the sun and the cloud blocking its light as both rise simultaneously in the eastern direction, thereby closing the lotus flowers. The arrival of king Raghu's army from the east sent a wave of terror in the hearts of women folk of the Persian countries so much so that the pinkish colour of their charming lotus-like faces, which had red lips still wet by wine they had been enjoying recently, suddenly vanished and was replaced by pallor as if they were suffering from grave deficiency of blood.]

Verse no. 62:

**सङ्ग्रामस्तुमुलस्तस्य पाश्चात्यैरश्वसाधनैः।
शाङ्गकूजितविज्ञेयप्रतियोधे रजस्यभूत्॥ ४-६२**

saṅgrāmastumulastasya pāścātyairasvādhanañiḥ|
śāṅgākūjitañeyapratyodhe rajasyabhūt || 4-62

4-62. A ferocious battle ensued between the western armies of the Persian kings who had horses as their dominant warfare medium (i.e. their cavalry was the main instrument or means of battle for them) and the eastern army of king Raghu that had the bow-and-arrow as the chief weapon for battle. So therefore, the fierce battle was fought amidst the thundering sound of the twang of the bows of king Raghu's army in the battle-field that was covered in darkness by the thick cloud of dust raised by the hooves of horses of the enemy's army.

[Note--One can vividly imagine the magnitude of the horrors of this face-to-face combat. The sound on the battle-field was deafening with the simultaneous twanging of bows and neighing of horses. Added to this cacophony was the war cries of soldiers, together with the groaning and lamentation of the wounded and the fallen, both men and animals. The horror is compounded when we see this ferocious battle being fought in the middle of ground covered with a thick cloud of dust raised by the cavalry, the chariots, the elephants, as well as the infantry--which reduced visibility to nearly nothing.]

Verse no. 63:

**भल्लापवर्जितैस्तेषां शिरोभिः श्मश्रुलैर्महीम्।
तस्तार सरघाव्याप्तैः स क्षौद्रपटलैरिव॥ ४-६३**

bhallāpavarjitaisteṣām śīrobhiḥ śmaśrulairmahīm|
tastāra saraghāvyāptaiḥ sa kṣaudrapaṭalairiva || 4-63

4-63. Just as gatherers of honey use long spears to rip open the honey-combs teeming with honey bees, so likewise king Raghu used his crescent-shaped arrows and spears to rip off the bearded heads of the enemy and covered the battle-field with their heads and torsos.

Verse no. 64:

अपनीतशिरस्त्राणाः शेषास्तं शरणं ययुः|
प्रणिपातप्रतीकारः संरम्भो हि महात्मनाम्॥ ४-६४

apanītaśirastrāṇāḥ śeṣāstaṁ śaraṇaṁ yayuḥ|
praṇipātapratīkāraḥ saṁrambho hi mahātmanām || 4-64

4-64. Those kings and commanders who survived the battle removed their helmets and other head-gear such as skull caps, and placed them politely before king Raghu as a token of their surrender before him, at which the gracious and generous king forgave them, because those who are great don't seek revenge unnecessarily from the vanquished who seek pardon and surrender themselves before the vanquisher.

[Note--It has been noted earlier that when king Raghu was taught to follow a life based on laws and rules of good and noble conduct that are collectively called Dharma. When he set out on the journey of conquest, he had decided to follow the principles of Dharma throughout his campaign, and to pardon those who surrender was a part of this vow. In this connection, refer to verse nos. 9-10 and 43 herein above.]

Verse no. 65:

विनयन्ते स्म तद्योधा मधुभिर्विजयश्रमम्|
आस्तीर्णाजिनरत्नासु द्राक्षावलयभूमिषु॥ ४-६५

vinayante sma tadyodhā madhubhīrvijayaśramam|
āstīrṇājinaratnāsu drākṣāvalayabhūmiṣu || 4-65

4-65. The soldiers of king Raghu overcame the fatigue of warfare by drinking wine made from grape-fruits when they entered orchards of grape trees and sat down on deer-skin spread on the ground to partake and enjoy liberal quantities of grape-wine.

[Note--In the previous verse no. 64 we have already read about the women folk of this country enjoying wine. This was the staple drink of the Persian countries, and so the soldiers too enjoyed this drink which was a novelty for them. It is quite possible that when the army headed back home to the Indian sub-continent, they had brought along the

exotic seeds of the grape tree which they then planted within their realm. It is possibly the reason that grape is now grown in all the states which were earlier conquered by king Raghu--i.e. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh where their capital Ayodhya is located.]

Verse no. 66:

ततः प्रतस्थे कौबेरीं भास्वानिव रघुर्दिशम्।
शरैरुस्रैरिवोदीच्यानुद्धरिष्यन् रसानिव॥ ४-६६

tataḥ pratasthe kauberīm bhāsvāniva raghurdiśam।
śarairusrairivodīcyānuddhariṣyan rasāniva || 4-66

4-66. Turning back (from Persia) towards the mainland of the Indian peninsula, king Raghu embarked on a mission to vanquish the rulers of the northern territories by his arrows, just like the sun that dries up the water by the dart of its rays when it moves north during the northern solstice.

[Note--Earlier during his journey of conquest, king Raghu had conquered the kings of the south, and now he moves to vanquish the kings of the northern territories of the mainland which was like the case of the sun transiting from the southern solstice to the northern solstice. Whereas the southern solstice occurs around 21-22 December, the northern solstice happens around 21-22 June. This is the prime summer season in India when the weather is extremely hot and dry. This is why it is said in this verse that the sun dries up the water when it transits to the northern solstice.

The analogy of the sun vis-a-vis king Raghu has been frequently used by Kalidas as it is very apt because of the fact that king Raghu belonged to the 'solar race', i.e. the sun race. King Raghu's glories, power, importance, majesty and fame were no less than that of the Sun-God.

The sun employs its dart-like rays to exact tax in the form of water from the deity of the earth by drying up water from the land, so likewise would king Raghu exact gifts and tributes from the lords of the northern territories to let them retain their kingdoms after vanquishing them with his arrows.]

Verse no. 67:

विनीताध्वश्रमास्तस्य सिन्धुतीरविचेष्टनैः।
दुधुवुर्वाजिनः स्कन्धाम्लग्नकुङ्कुमकेसरान्॥ ४-६७

vinītādhvaśramāstasya sindhutīraviceṣṭanaiḥ।
dudhuvurvājinaḥ skandhāmlagnakuṅkumakesarān || 4-67

4-67. The horses of king Raghu's army rolled over on the banks of river Sindhu (also known as the Indus river) and bathed in its water to shake off the dust of saffron that had stuck to their skin while passing through the northern territories.

[Note--The poet has so skilfully outlined the course king Raghu's army took when he decided to vanquish the kings of the northern territories, without specifying any country by name, but clearly indicating the area by indirect means, such as citing saffron dust and the horses relaxing on the banks of river Sindhu.

The 'Sindhu river', also known as the Indus river, originates in the Tibetan plateau, traverses through the upper reaches of the Himalayas such as the Ladakha region of India, crosses over to the west to the present day Pakistan, and eventually enters the Arabian Sea near the city of Karachi in Pakistan. It passes through Punjab and Sindha provinces. It was the seat of the ancient 'Indus valley civilisation'. It is a key part of the Himalayan river system. Its main tributaries are Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej rivers. It should be noted here that the point of time to which our narrative deals with, such man-made political boundaries that divide countries and continents were absent, and it was a single land mass consisting of a large number of local kings and their kingdoms.

'Saffron' is grown in central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan, but the world's largest grower of 'saffron' is Persia. It is also grown in Kashmir state of northern India in the Himalayan ranges, but at this point of time the army of king Raghu was returning from the central Asian region, particularly in Persia and Afghanistan, and hadn't reached Kashmir yet. This part of the land is dry, and the ground dust was covered by saffron pollen grains spread by the wind blowing overland.

So therefore, as king Raghu's army marched through this land and headed in the direction of northern India, the scented pollen of saffron blown by the wind got mixed with the dust raised by the hooves of horses of his cavalry and got stuck on the bodies of horses, specially their manes. When the army reached the banks of river Sindhu, it decided to halt briefly for a rest. The horses rolled on the banks of this river to relax, and even splashed around in its water, whence the dust of saffron that had stuck on their bodies and armour got shaken off. Reference to the Sindhu river that is located in the present day provinces of Punjab and Sindha of Pakistan, the poet has made it amply clear that the army of king Raghu had entered these lands after conquering the kings of Persia as it moved along the river and its tributaries to vanquish remaining kings of the region.]

Verse no. 68:

तत्र हूणावरोधानां भर्तृषु व्यक्तविक्रमम्
कपोलपाटलादेशि बभूव रघुचेष्टितम्॥ ४-६८

tatra hūṇāvarodhānāṃ bharṭṛṣu vyaktavikramam|
kapolapāṭalādeśi babhūva raghučeṣṭitam || 4-68

4-68. When the women folk of the 'Hunas' (also pronounced as 'Hun' in English) tribe heard of king Raghu's exceptional voyage of conquest when he had vanquished the kings of the northern territories (verse no. 66), i.e. the Paarsi kings, their cheeks became flushed

with embarrassment and envy at Raghu's remarkable reputation of valour, prowess, powers, bravery and invincibility.

{These women developed goose-bumps and flushed cheeks when they heard of king Raghu and his conquests of the kings of far northwest regions for two reasons: (i) One was that they learnt how he would spare the vanquished kings from harsh treatment and restored them back on their throne, which was in stark contrast to the attitude of their barbarian husbands who were cruel conquerors relishing bloodshed, land grab, wild rampaging, and destruction of the vanquished lands and their inhabitants when they conquered large tracts of eastern and central Europe, and had also raided the famous and powerful Roman Empire between the 4th and the 6th centuries. The most famous of the Hunas/Huns was Attila the Huna /Hun.

And (ii) the other reason for their embarrassment was the news that arrived as to how king Raghu had vanquished the kings of Parsia (verse nos. 61-64) and the Kambhoj region (verse no. 69 herein below), as their husbands belonging to the Huna tribe were connected to these kings loosely, and perhaps also fought alongside them as free-lancers and mercenaries. The defeat of these kings at the hands of king Raghu was a mighty source of infamy for this proud nomadic warrior class as this defeat also meant that the Huns too were defeated although they were not the dominant part of the king's army but played only a side or subsidiary role as mercenaries and free-lancer. But the defeat of the principle king inspite of his being aided by the ferocious Huns was a ignominious development that filled their women folk with shame.}

[Note--The ancient Huna (also spelled as 'Hun' in English) tribes were fierce and wild nomadic warrior class of Central Asia region. They were proud of their strength and invincibility. Their women folk had the notion that no one was stronger than their men. So when the news of conquests of king Raghu reached them, they were filled with envy and embarrassment because they discovered that there was someone not only more powerful than their husbands, but who was an ideal conqueror who desisted from harshness and greed, and instead preferred a humane approach towards all those whom he vanquished, which was in sharp contrast to their own husbands who were ruthless killers and cruelty personified.

The 'Hunas' (also pronounced as 'Huns') settled as herdsmen, but soon evolved into a diverse group of warrior horsemen classes of nomadic tribes living in and around the steppes of central Asia. Though they were primarily unorganized unlike other powerful rulers such as the Paarsi kings of Persia and the kings of Kambhoj, yet they were famed for their stupendous valour and strength in battle. They moved west and conquered a large swathe of eastern and central Europe around 370 CE, and had also raided the famous and powerful Roman Empire between the 4th and the 6th centuries. The most famous of the Hunas/Huns was Attila the Huna /Hun.

It is to be noted here that the period to which the conquests of king Raghu pertains was many centuries earlier than the period of the Hunas recorded by modern historians. So it is obvious that Raghu was dealing with their ancestors who lived during his time.]

Verse no. 69:

काम्बोजाः समरे सोढुं तस्य वीर्यमनीश्वराः।
गजालानपरिक्लिष्टैरक्षोदैः सार्धमानताः॥ ४-६९

kāmbojāḥ samare soḍhum tasya vīryamanīśvarāḥ।
gajālānaparikliṣṭairakṣotaiḥ sārddhamānatāḥ || 4-69

4-69. The kings of the Kambhoj region¹ could not stand against the valour and bravery of king Raghu in battle, and like the walnut trees² which had bent their tops when the elephants of king Raghu's army that were tied to these trees rubbed their backs on the trunks of these trees and pulled fiercely at them with force in an attempt to break free, these kings of the Kambhoj region also bowed before king Raghu and surrendered before him.

[Note--¹The Kambhoj region corresponded to north-western frontier region of the Indian sub-continent in ancient times, which now is part of modern day Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. This region was known for its war-like people who were skilled horsemen and connected to the Persian empire.

A battle surely must have been fought, though such an event has not been specifically mentioned in this verse. But it is quite possible because this land was inhabited by warrior tribes who prided themselves for their valour, bravery and strength. So it is unlikely that they had surrendered without a fight.

²The walnut trees are found in abundance in the region of Persia and Central Asia and extend upto the north-western region of ancient India that included Afghanistan. Hence, the army of king Raghu was in this region as is clear by the reference of the walnut tree to which his elephants were tied.

An interesting point to note here is that this verse refers to the 'elephants' of Raghu's army, i.e. the elephant corps, and earlier verse no. 67 had mentioned the 'horses', i.e. the cavalry. These two war animals were the main components of his army and had accompanied it throughout. However, when king Raghu turned to conquer the kings of the Himalayan region, he left behind his elephants for practical reasons, and took along only the horses--this would be evident in verse no. 71 herein below.]

Verse no. 70:

तेषां सदश्वभूयिष्ठास्तुङ्गा द्रविणराशयः।
उपदा विविशुः शश्वन्नोत्सेकाः कोसलेश्वरम्॥ ४-७०

teṣāṃ sadaśvabhūyiṣṭhāstuṅgā draviṇarāśayaḥ।
upadā vivīśuḥ śaśvannotsekāḥ kosaleśvaram || 4-70

4-70. When the kings of Kambhoj were subdued by king Raghu, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya), a large number of their magnificent thorough breed of horses that were exclusive to the region (of present day Afghanistan) and heaps of gold came to king

Raghu as gifts and tributes paid by these kings. But even though Raghu was honoured by such rich and invaluable gifts in large numbers and huge quantities, yet he remained modest and gracious in his behaviour and attitude because the negative traits of pride, ego and haughtiness did not touch him.

[Note--Usually a conqueror becomes proud and haughty of his successful feats, treating the vanquished kings with contempt and disdain. But king Raghu was of a different mould; he was always humble, polite and dignified, and he treated his opponent king with dignity and respect. It is because Raghu had set out on this campaign with a commitment that he would not violate the principles of Dharma under any circumstances, and therefore he believed that the opposite king was within his right to protect his self-respect as well as his wealth and land from an invader, though that invader was one who was a strict adherent of Dharma and had not come with a malefic intention to grab his land or wealth, nor to kill him and turn his land to waste unnecessarily, but he did so as this was a tradition in his great family of renowned warrior kings and emperors to go on a voyage of Diga-Vijay once in a while to establish and reiterate their authority and command over their vast and extended realm. King Raghu never boasted of his exploits and conquests, and received the gifts and tributes given to him by the vanquished kings with politeness, grace and dignity, doing nothing that would make his opponents feel embarrassed, insulted or humiliated. King Raghu ensured that the self-respect of the vanquished kings was never undermined because by adopting this strategy he made them friends and not silent enemies who would keep quiet for now because the time and fate were against them, but would soon gather together and revolt at the first opportunity once Raghu was far away.]

Verse no. 71:

ततो गौरीगुरुं शैलमारुरोहाश्वसाधनः।
वर्धयन्निव तत्कूटानुद्धतैर्धातुरेणुभिः॥ ४-७१

tato gaurīgurum śailamārurohāśvasāadhanah।
vardhayanniva tatkūṭānuddhūtairdhātureṇubhiḥ || 4-71

4-71. When king Raghu arrived at the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range with an intent to conquer the kings of the mountainous region, he took along the horses of his cavalry, and left the elephant corps behind at the base camp. As the horses marched forward, their hooves kicked up a mighty cloud of dust containing minerals found on the slopes of the Himalayas¹. This dense cloud of mineral dust reached up high into the sky, higher than the summit of the mountains and hills, and from a distance it looked as if king Raghu was virtually pushing the Himalaya mountains to rise up and reach high up for the skies to welcome him.

{The mineral dust reaching high up in the sky also symbolically meant that the mountain has stood up to welcome king Raghu. It also may mean that the king was announcing his arrival and proclaiming his victory to the deity of the mountain residing on the summit.}

[Note--¹The minerals that are found on the slopes of the Himalayan mountain range are the ores of copper, lead, zinc and iron chiefly, as well as nickel, cobalt, antimony and tungsten.

The word ' gaurīgurum ' refers to goddess Parvati, also known as Gauri, who is the divine consort of Lord Shiva. According to legends, the king of the Himalayas was the father of Gauri or Parvati.

The word also refers to the dry red vermillion powder that married women apply on their forehead and hairs in India. The rusted colour of metals copper, lead, iron etc. are more or less similar to the dry vermillion powder, and incidentally, the dry vermillion also contains an admixture of the dust of these metals in various ratios, especially red lead or oxide of lead, besides mercuric sulphide.]

Verse no. 72:

शशंस तुल्यसत्त्वानां सैन्यघोषेऽप्यसंभ्रमम्
गुहाशयानां सिंहानां परिवृत्यावलोकितम्॥ ४-७२

śaśaṁsa tulyasattvānām sainyaghoṣe'pyasambhramam|
guhāśayānām simhānām parivṛtyāvalokitam || 4-72

4-72. As the army of king Raghu marched forward along the slopes of the mountains, it saw the lions, who had been reclining peacefully in their dens in the caves on these slopes till now, waking up due to the din created by the army's march, raising their heads nonchalantly, and gazing at the army with indifference. (These lions didn't stir from their position, but simply gazed at this unexpected new spectacle which was a bit of a novelty for them. There was no fear or urgency in their demeanours.)

{There is another way that this verse can be interpreted as follows: King Raghu told his soldiers to look at and learn a lesson from the lions who had been lying peacefully till now, but the din and tumult created by the marching army had now woken them up. These lions half rose from their reclining posture and raised their heads to look at the army with indifference as if they weren't at all afraid of the latter. The king invoked this sight to inspire his soldiers to be bold and brave like the lions, and to remain fearless and unmoved like them inspite of the provocation from the enemy just like these lions who remained nonchalant and indifferent to the army apparently disturbing them without any rhyme or reason, and marching forward towards them as if it intended to attack or challenge them. These lions would remain quiet till the point of time the army would actually attack them, when the former would hit back at the latter with a powerful blow to annihilate their tormentors entirely. So should a competent army behave too--it should remain vigilant but not get provoked unnecessarily. }

[Note--The army has by now reached the slopes of the mountains of the Himalayas where it saw caves in which lions lived. Obviously these slopes were covered with forests and caves inhabited by lions. The very fact that the men and animals, in this case the horses

of the army's cavalry units, continued to march ahead inspite of seeing so many lions staring at them, shows how brave, well-trained and disciplined king Raghu's army was.]

Verse no. 73:

**भूर्जेषु मर्मरीभूताः कीचकध्वनिहेतवः।
गङ्गाशीकरिणो मार्गे मरुतस्तं सिषेविरे॥ ४-७३**

bhūrjeṣu marmarībhūtāḥ kīcakadhvanihetavaḥ |
gaṅgāśīkariṇo mārge marutastam siṣevire || 4-73

4-73. The soft breeze welcomed king Raghu and subtly praised him by making a murmuring sound by rustling against the leaves of the birch tree, as well as a creaking or whistling sound while passing through thickets of the bamboo trees, and at the same time giving him comfort by its cool touch that was made possible by the water particles that the breeze had carried with it as it swept over the surface of river Ganges.

[Note--The reference to river Ganges means that king Raghu and his army had reached the western part of Himalaya mountains where this river descends from the higher reaches where it originates in a glacier called Gangotri, in the Garwhal region of the Himalayas, and comes down to earth to reach the plains at Haridwar, a pilgrim place at the foothills of the Himalayan ranges.]

Verse no. 74:

**विशश्रमुर्नमेरूणां छायास्वध्यास्य सैनिकाः।
दृषदो वासितोत्सङ्गा निषण्णमृगनाभिभिः॥ ४-७४**

viśaśramurnamerūṇāṁ chāyāsvadhyāsyā sainikāḥ |
dṛṣado vāsitotsaṅgā niṣaṇṇamṛganābhibhiḥ || 4-74

4-74. The soldiers of king Raghu sat down to take rest and relax in the shade of the Nameru tree¹, on rocks that were scented by the fragrance of the musk found in the navel of the musk-deer who had rested on these rocks earlier.

[Note--¹The Nameru tree is also known as the Rudraksha Tree or Blue Marble tree; its botanical name is 'Elaeocarpus ganitrus'. It is a large evergreen tree of the Himalayas. The Rudraksha has great religious significance in Hinduism. The tree grows upto 60 feet, and thrives in warm, humid atmosphere. The Rudraksha is the seed of its fruit, called the 'blue fruit'. Its a favourite of ascetics and devotees of Lord Shiva.]

Verse no. 75:

सरलासक्तमातङ्गग्रैवेयस्फुरितत्विषः।

आसन्नोषधयो नेतुर्नक्तमस्नेहदीपिकाः॥ ४-७५

saralāsaktamātaṅgagraiveyasphuritatviṣaḥ|
āsannoṣadhayo neturnaktamasnehadīpikāḥ || 4-75

4-75. The garlands made of creepers of phosphorescent herbs that were slung around the necks of the elephants tied to the deodar trees¹ emanated so much light that it was sufficient enough to serve the purpose of magical lamps that illuminated the surroundings without the use of oil for the army during the night when it pitched camp to take rest.

[Note--¹The deodar cedar trees are found in western Himalayas. Their botanical name is 'Cedrus deodara'. They are large, evergreen coniferous trees that thrive in moist cool temperate climate at high altitudes, roughly 1500-3200 meters across the western part of the Himalayan range. They are also called the 'wood of the gods'.]

Verse no. 76:

तस्योत्सृष्टनिवासेषु कण्ठरज्जुक्षतत्वचः।

गजवर्ष्म किरातेभ्यः शशंसुर्देवदारवः॥ ४-७६

tasyotsrṣṭanivāseṣu kaṇṭharajjukṣatatvacaḥ|
gajavarṣma kirātebhyaḥ śaśaṁsurdevadāravaḥ || 4-76

4-76. After king Raghu's army had departed from the site, the tribals called 'bhils' came to know about the majestic heights of the war elephants when they saw the chaffing of the outer skin of the trunks and the bruise marks left on the barks of the deodar trees to which these elephants were tied at the time the army had halted for the night to take rest. The elephants had rubbed their backs against the trunks of the trees and caused bruise marks on their barks by constant tug-and-pull of the chains that were tied around these trees to rein in the restless elephants.

Verse no. 77:

तत्र जन्यं रघोर्घोरं पर्वतीयैर्गणैरभूत्।

नाराचक्षेपणीयाश्मनिष्पेषोत्पतितानलम्॥ ४-७७

tatra janyaṁ raghorghoraṁ parvatīyairgaṇairabhūt|
nārācakṣepaṇīyāśmaniṣpeṣotpatitānalam || 4-77

4-77. A ferocious battle took place between the army of king Raghu and the local mountain tribes of the upper reaches of the Himalayas. During this violent confrontation, arrows, catapults that used rocks, and Bhindipals (an ancient weapon used as hand-held

missile; it was a spear, javelin or dart or a similar projectile that was usually shot by a small hand-held mechanism similar to a bigger catapult that was mounted on wheels) were liberally used.

[Note--The Bhindipal, or the hand-held catapult, is a forked stick with an elastic band fastened to the two prongs and used to shoot small stones or similar missiles at the enemy. In this case, spears, arrows and darts in addition to the stones were used as weapons to attack the enemy.]

Verse no. 78:

**शरैरुत्सवसंकेतान्स कृत्वा विरतोत्सवान्
जयोदाहरणं बाहवोर्गापयामास किन्नरान्॥ ४-७८**

śarairutsavasamketānsa kṛtvā viratotsavān|
jayodāharaṇaṁ bāhvorgāpayāmāsa kiṁnarān || 4-78

4-78. King Raghu used his powerful and infallible arrows to defeat the mountain tribe called 'Utsav-Sanket' (which was the leading tribe of the region), and this achievement was lauded by the Kinnars (the dancers and singers of heaven) when they sang laurels (praises) to honour him for this victory.

Verse no. 79:

**परस्परेण विज्ञातस्तेषूपायनपाणिषु
राज्ञा हिमवतः सारो राज्ञः सारो हिमाद्रिणा॥ ४-७९**

paraspāreṇa vijñātasteṣūpāyanapāṇiṣu|
rājñā himavataḥ sāro rājñāḥ sāro himādrīṇā || 4-79

4-79. When the leaders of the defeated mountain tribes came bearing gold and a lot of other costly gifts in their hands to be given to king Raghu as tribute and as symbols of mark of respect for him, it was only then that the king realised how rich the territories of the mountains of the Himalayas were, and how seemingly backward tribes of the mountains were indeed no less wealthy than their counterparts elsewhere.

Similarly, the tribes of the Himalayas realised how powerful and invincible king Raghu was (though in the beginning of the confrontation they had thought that since the rough mountains were their homeland about which they had first-hand strategic knowledge as compared to an outside army, so it would be easy to push-back the invaders, but their assessment about the powers and prowess of king Raghu were proved wrong). This awareness motivated them to praise king Raghu (as brave and valiant warriors always have respect for their opponents inspite of them being bitter adversaries in the battle-field).

Verse no. 80:

तत्राक्षोभ्यं यशोराशिं निवेश्यावरूरोह सः।
पौलस्त्यतुलितस्याद्रेरदधान इव ह्रियम्॥ ४-८०

tatrākṣobhyaṁ yaśorāśiṁ niveśyāvaruroha saḥ।
paulastyatulitasyādrerādadhāna iva hriyam || 4-80

4-80. After establishing his glories and putting the stamp of his authority on the mountainous realms of the Himalayas, king Raghu descended from these mountains without proceeding to Mt. Kailash as a mark of respect for Lord Shiva's abode and to avoid being equalled to the notorious demon king Ravana who had once insulted Lord Shiva by lifting the entire mountain known as Mt. Kailash, the abode of the Lord on earth, by his bare hands (to prove that he, Ravana, had no fear of Lord Shiva, and was more powerful and strong than the mountain and its deity, Lord Shiva)¹.

{There is another way this verse can be interpreted as follows: After establishing his glories and putting the stamp of his authority on the mountainous realms of the Himalayas, king Raghu descended from these mountains without proceeding to Mt. Kailash because the latter appeared to step back and go out of sight of king Raghu so as to avoid being subjected to another round humiliation after it was first snubbed by the demon king Ravana who had lifted it by his bare hands.}

[Note--¹Lifting of Mt. Kailash was not a small feat, and Ravana has himself boasted of this remarkable achievement involving stupendous strength, courage and power before Angad, the emissary of Lord Ram--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 22-a; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 28.

King Raghu had no intention of emulating the demon king Ravana and being categorised as one like him in the annals of history. He did not wish to do anything that would be deemed as insulting to Lord Shiva as well as Mt. Kailash which is the Lord's abode on earth. Mt. Kailash was not merely another part of the Himalayan mountains, but it had great religious importance and a sanctity by the virtue of it being an abode of Lord Shiva which king Raghu did not want to violate. So therefore, he retraced his step after vanquishing the tribal chieftains of the region.]

Verse no. 81:

चकम्पे तीर्णलौहित्ये तस्मिन्प्रागज्योतिषेश्वरः।
तद्गजालानतां प्राप्तैः सह कालागुरुद्रुमैः॥ ४-८१

cakampe tīṇalauhitye tasminprāgjyotiṣeśvaraḥ।
tadgajālānatāṁ prāptaiḥ saha kālāgurudrumaiḥ || 4-81

4-81. King Raghu thence proceeded to the eastern part of the Himalayan range of mountains. When he crossed the river called 'lauhitya' (the part of the river Brahmaputra which flows in upper Assam), the news of his arrival with an army consisting of war elephants that shook the very roots of the black agar-wood trees to which they were tied, sent a wave of terror in the heart of the king of the 'Praagjoyotisha' ('prāggyotiṣeśvaraḥ').

[Note--The word 'prāggyotiṣeśvaraḥ' has two parts: viz. (i) prāggyotiṣ that refers to the state of Assam, and (ii) eśvaraḥ which means the lord or ruler of that province. The king had already heard of king Raghu's invincibility, prowess and strength, and how he had vanquished even the most powerful of adversaries throughout his campaign, without exception.

The botanical name of the agar-wood tree is *Aquilaria malaccensis* / *agallocha*, and it is also known as the Aloe tree, the Gaharu or Oud tree, or the Eagle-wood tree. It is an evergreen tree renowned for producing a highly fragrant, dark resin which is used to make very expensive incense and perfume. They rise upto 21 meters in height, and is native to the state of Assam, especially in the districts of Golaghat, Jorhat and Sivasagar.

The remarkable aspect of Kalidas' narration is that the way he has named and described trees, flowers, rivers, mountain and hill sides, contours and the topography of the lands that king Raghu's army passed through, along with other features of Nature along the way, clearly and without leaving any doubt prove that the scholarly poet was a versatile genius who was equally at ease with the language and its many aspects as he was with the geography, history and traditions of the time.]

Verse no. 82:

न प्रसेहे स रुद्धार्कमधारावर्षदुर्दिनम्]

रथवर्त्मरजोऽप्यस्य कुत एव पताकिनीम्॥ ४-८२

na prasehe sa ruddhārkamadhārāvarṣadurdinam|
rathavartmarajo'pyasya kuta eva patākinīm || 4-82

4-82. The king of that province was so terrorised that he could not bear even the sight of darkness caused by the dust raised by the chariots of king Raghu which obscured sunlight even though there were no clouds in the sky, then one can imagine how could he have gathered courage to face Raghu's army face-to-face in the battle-field.

[Note--The army was still at some distance, but the dust kicked up by the movement of the chariots, horses, elephants and soldiers had risen high and covered the whole sky like a thick bank of dark clouds so much so that sun got obscured and there was an all-enveloping darkness everywhere, resembling a calamitous, dooms-day scenario. This alarmed the king of Assam so much that he shook with fear at the very thought of horrors that were descending on him. This was when the army was yet to reach his doorstep. Say, what courage would he show when the army of king Raghu would physically knock at his door and challenge him for a hand-to-hand battle when the mere sight of the dark sky so much scared him out of his wits?]

Verse no. 83:

तमीशः कामरूपाणामत्याखण्डलविक्रमम्

भेजे भिन्नकटैर्नागैरन्यानुपरुरोध यैः॥ ४-८३

tamiśaḥ kāmārūpāṇāmatyākhaṇḍalavikramam|

bheje bhinnakaṭairnāgairanyānuparurodha yaiḥ || 4-83

4-83. The king of Kamroop (another name for the province of Assam) offered king Raghu, whose valour, powers, prowess and strength were superior to that of Indra, the king of heaven, gifts consisting of elephants from whose temples the scented ichor was effusing, and who were so powerful and strong that the king of Kamroop had successfully employed these elephants to forestall many previous attackers and invaders.

[Note--King of Assam, also known as Kamroop, could have used these elephants against king Raghu to stop him. But the reputation of Raghu as an invincible warrior was so formidable and far superior to even Indra that the king of Kamroop thought it better, prudent and wise to make a friendly compromise rather than face a fate that was certain to be catastrophic for him, his honour, his army, and his kingdom. When faced with a choice between sure annihilation and survival with honour, especially when he had learnt that king Raghu was a very gracious and kind conqueror who would never humiliate his opponent if the latter surrenders peacefully before him, but would restore his kingdom and honour back to him, the king of Kamroop chose wisdom and practical prudence over ego and recklessness. So therefore, he submitted peacefully before king Raghu by giving him his war elephants as a token of his surrender.]

Verse no. 84:

कामरूपेश्वरस्तस्य हेमपीठाधिदेवताम्

रत्नपुष्पोपहारेण छाद्यमानर्च पादयोः॥ ४-८४

kāmārūpeśvarastasya hemapīṭhādhidevatām|

ratnapuṣpopahāreṇa chāyamānarca pādayoḥ || 4-84

4-84. The king of Kamroop showed exceptional honour to king Raghu by making him sit on his own throne made of gold, and then paid tributes to him by offering precious gems as symbolic flowers at king Raghu's feet that had been placed on a footstool, with as much reverence as he would have shown to the deity of the kingdom.

[Note--The reference to the golden throne and the footstool shows how great a respect the king of Kamroop showed to king Raghu, the like of which no other king had done yet. This picture is completed when a reference is made to the deity of the kingdom, which shows that king Raghu was not simply shown respect as a conqueror but was also duly worshipped as if he was a personified form of the deity. A king expects the deity to be

compassionate and gracious towards him, so this way of honouring king Raghu implied that the king of Kamroop expected grace and a benevolent treatment at the hands of his vanquisher.

This kind of honour shown to king Raghu by the king of Kamroop was a very clever diplomatic manoeuvre on the latter's part as it ensured that Raghu would be obliged to be polite, gracious and kind towards him, for otherwise Raghu would invite scorn and censor for being rude towards someone who was showing him so much respect. It would also ensure that king Raghu would restore the kingdom back to the king of Kamroop as was his routine way of dealing with opposite kings who surrendered, instead of annexing the latter's kingdom, as the latter course would cast him in very bad light. Further, the king of Kamroop thought that with such a powerful ally as Raghu by his side, he would feel comfortable against future invaders, and if the need arose then king Raghu would come to his rescue. The very fact that the king of Kamroop now has a very powerful ally and friend in king Raghu, whose fame was not hidden from anyone, would definitely send chills down the spine of his enemies.]

Verse no. 85:

इति जित्वा दिशो जिष्णुर्न्यवर्तत रथोद्धतम्
रजो विश्रामयन्नाज्ञां छत्रशून्येषु मौलिषु॥ ४-८५

iti jitvā diśo jiṣṇurnyavartata rathoddhatam|
rajo viśrāmayanrājñāṁ chatraśūnyeṣu mauliṣu || 4-85

4-85. In this way, having conquered all the four quarters of the land and subjugating all the kings by symbolically letting the dust of his chariot settle on their crowns, king Raghu returned to his own capital (of Ayodhya).

[Note--When the kings were defeated by king Raghu, or they voluntarily surrendered before him, they had to remove their crowns and place them at his feet. It is like saying that the crowns of vanquished kings were put on the ground before king Raghu as a token of their surrender, and these crowns got covered with the dust raised by the wheels of Raghu's chariot. If a king loses his crown, it is tantamount to his losing his honour and dignity as a sovereign. To wit, king Raghu's march of conquest left behind a dusty trail of vanquished and dethroned kings. Even if they were restored to their throne by the grace and benevolence of king Raghu, yet their self-respect, dignity, honour, independence and sovereignty were severely compromised.]

Verse no. 86:

स विश्वजितमाजहे यज्ञं सर्वस्वदक्षिणम्
आदानं हि विसर्गाय सतां वारिमुचामिव॥ ४-८६

sa viśvajitamājahre yajñam sarvasvadakṣiṇam|
ādānam hi visargāya satām vārimucāmiva || 4-86

4-86. After returning to his capital at the end of his successful military campaign of conquests, king Raghu celebrated his achievements by performing a fire sacrifice which entails that all the gains of conquests are to be given away as charity and alms, because greatness lies in giving away what one gets outside his bare needs by donating what is surplus, just like the rain-cloud that collects water in the form of water-vapour from different sources and then returns the same water back to earth in the form of rain so that large tracts of land and its inhabitants could benefit from its largesse.

[Note--In this metaphor, just like the clouds collect water in the form of water-vapour that evaporates from ponds, lakes, rivers and oceans, and then distributes this collected water over vast areas of earth so that plants and animals who don't have direct access to water-sources too can benefit from this life-saving liquid, without the cloud keeping any water for itself, so likewise great and noble people collect wealth from different sources who have such wealth to spare, and then distribute the collected wealth equitably amongst those who need it, without keeping any thing for themselves.

In the present case, king Raghu collected gifts and tributes from the kings whom he had vanquished, and gifted everything to the needy and deserving by way of alms, charities and donation during the conduct of the celebratory fire sacrifice to commemorate his remarkable achievements.]

Verse no. 87:

सत्रान्ते सचिवसखः पुरस्क्रियाभिर्गुर्वीभिः शमितपराजयव्यलीकान्|
काकुत्स्थश्चिरविरहोत्सुकावरोधान् राजन्यान्स्वपुरनिवृत्तयेऽनुमेने ॥ ४-८७

satrānte sacivasakhaḥ puraskriyābhīrgurvībhiḥ śamitaparājayavyalīkān|
kākutsthaścīravirahotsukāvarodhān rājanyānsvapurānivr̥ttaye'numene || 4-87

4-87. At the conclusion of the ritual of the fire sacrifice, king Raghu consulted his ministers and courtiers regarding the many kings who had accompanied him during his journey, and had now come with him to his capital to attend the fire sacrifice. These kings were so happy with the respectful treatment given to them by king Raghu that they forgot about their defeat at his hands. But they yearned to go back to their own kingdoms to meet their respective queens whom they had been missing during the long journey with king Raghu.

So therefore, on the advise given by his trusted ministers, king Raghu bestowed honours upon these kings, and granted them permission to go back to their respective kingdoms.

[Note--This system of defeated kings proving their loyalty towards the victorious king by either lending him support in the form of logistics, men, animals and weapons, or better still accompanying themselves with their own armies to augment the army of the victor

king, ensured that long-drawn military campaigns could be successfully carried out in far-away lands. The sick and the wounded were left behind in the kingdoms that were conquered so that they can get proper treatment and rest, while the shortfall of weapons, animals, men and materials were compensated by support from in the defeated king's resources. This is one and the most crucial reason why king Raghu would always show respect and grace to his adversaries once the latter surrendered as it ensured their loyalty, support and help in a distant and alien land. He made friends, and not enemies, wherever he went.]

Verse no. 88:

ते रेखाकुलिशातपत्रचिह्नं समाजश्चरणयुगं प्रसादलभ्यम्
प्रस्थानप्रणतिभिरङ्गुलीषु चक्रुर्मौलिसक्च्युतमकरन्दरेणुगौरम्॥ ४-८८

te rekhākuliśātapatracihnam samrājaścaraṇayugam prasādalabhyam|
prasthānapraṇatibhiraṅgulīṣu cakrurmaulisrakcyutamakarandareṇugauram || 4-88

4-88. At the time of their departure, these grateful kings bowed at the feet of king Raghu and paid their reverence to him by touching the soles of his feet which had all the marks of a 'chakravarti king', i.e. a king whose authority and reign extended to cover all the four directions of the earth like a circle that surrounds everything within its circumference. These marks were lines on king Raghu's soles with contours resembling a flag, a vajra (a mace), and an umbrella or a parasol, signs that are regarded as symbols of eternal kingship that was granted to him by destiny.

While these kings were bowing their heads at the feet of king Raghu, the fragrant pollen and sweet nectar dribbling from their garlands of fresh flowers fell on the feet of Raghu and covered them with a white scented viscous liquid.

[Note--The nectar from flowers was in the form of a viscous liquid, and the pollen added fragrance and texture to it. The feet of king Raghu were literally soaked with this scented thick liquid as he sat on his throne and the kings came to bow and touch his feet one by one before taking leave from him.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये चतुर्थः सर्गः

iti kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye caturthaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 4th canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-76:

Introduction

When king Raghu had given away all the wealth he had with him to alms seekers at the end of his sacrifice, called the 'Vishwa-Jeet Yagya', to commemorate his victorious campaign that made him an emperor of all the four directions, at that time a young sage named Kautsamuni came to him to seek his help. Kautsamuni had just completed his education under the aegis of a learned sage named Vartantu Rishi. As it was a custom of those times that when a young student's education was completed, he was obliged to give something to his guru or teacher as a mark of thanksgiving and gratitude, so Kautsamuni asked his teacher Vartantu Rishi what he should be given as fees. Though the teacher knew that his disciple had no resources to give him anything, but when Kautsamuni insisted that he would not be satisfied unless he frees himself from this obligation to his teacher, the senior sage became angry, and out of frustration at his student's obstinate behaviour, he demanded 14 crores {1 crore = 10 million} gold pieces in return for all the 14 fields of knowledge he had given to his disciple as part of his comprehensive education.

The young student didn't lose courage, and since he had learnt that king Raghu was a very charitable king and had performed a huge sacrifice where immense amount of wealth was given away just for the asking, he decided to approach the king to help him meet his teacher's demand. But Kautsamuni was late as king Raghu had nothing left in his treasury by the time the young sage arrived. But Raghu did not want that any seeker should go back empty-handed from his door, so he requested the young student to wait a while so that he can make suitable arrangements to fulfil his request.

King Raghu decided that since fulfilment of the young Brahmin student's demand was a part of his Dharma (religiously sanctified duty), and since he truly had nothing left with him that he could give to this seeker of help, so therefore it would be in fitness of things to get the necessary wealth from Kuber, the treasurer of heaven, who has no shortage of wealth. With this view in mind, Raghu ordered his charioteer to prepare the war chariot and commanded his army to get ready for a campaign next morning to go to heaven and force Kuber to give him the necessary amount of gold pieces so that the Brahmin student may not return empty-handed.

When Kuber received the news that king Raghu was about to attack heaven to exact tax and tribute from him so that the needs of an alms seeker could be satisfied, which was a noble aim, and convinced that Raghu would not keep a single dime with himself, Kuber decided to show graciousness and be charitable himself. Besides this view, Kuber was well aware of Raghu's prowess and powers, and therefore he made up his mind to avoid confrontation with the king and give him more gold than he had expected as a tribute from Kuber by successfully vanquishing the latter in battle.

Kuber showered so much gold that king Raghu's treasury overflowed with it. Overjoyed, Raghu tried to give every single piece of gold to the young alms seeking student, but the latter too was a faithful follower of the principles of Dharma as he refused to accept even a single gold piece more than what his teacher had demanded from him as his fees. Every one who witnessed this scene--the magnanimous and charitable king giving away every single piece of gold, and the alms seeker not accepting even a single piece more than what was needed to pay to his teacher as the latter's fees or guru-dakshina--applauded both of them.

Finally, Kautsamuni accepted only what was necessary, and he was so overwhelmed with gratitude towards king Raghu that he blessed his benefactor that he will soon beget a son who would be superior to him in all fields, and whose fame would shine like the sun shines in the sky. Meanwhile, king Raghu ordered all the demanded gold coins to be loaded on horse-backs and camels to be transported to the hermitage of Kautsamuni's teacher, sage Vartantu Rishi.

In due course of time, a son was born to king Raghu, and the father named him 'Aja'. Gradually, Aja grew up to become a wonderful adult and acquired all knowledge under the patronage of sage Vashistha, the royal priest and preceptor of the kingdom.

Meanwhile, king Bhoj of the kingdom of Vidharva had a sister named Indumati. He had heard of prince Aja's glories, so king Bhoj sent an invitation to king Raghu to permit his son Aja to participate in the marriage ceremony organised for his sister. Raghu also wanted Aja to get married, and being aware of the fame of king Bhoj who was of an equal status as himself, king Raghu accepted the invitation and sent his son Aja along with a large detachment of his troops to Vidharva.

On the way, the prince and his troops halted on the banks of river Narmada. A wild male elephant, from whose temples emanated a very strong smell of the ichor, a viscous liquid that seeps out from the glands of adult elephants in rut, emerged from the middle of the river and dashed towards the camp of Aja. The elephant's wild dash for the camp as well as the strong scent of its ichor made all the elephants, horses and soldiers in Aja's camp run helter-skelter in shock and awe. To stop this wild elephant from causing more damage, Aja shot his powerful arrow at the head of that elephant. No sooner did the arrow hit the elephant, than the elephant transformed into a divine figure who praised Aja for his courage and valour, and showered heavenly flowers upon him.

This divine figure told Aja: "Oh noble Aja! My name is Prayamvad, and I am a son of Priyadarshan, the king of Gandharvas. I had become an elephant due to a curse of sage Matanga. I thank you for granting me liberation from that curse. So I wish to give you something in return in gratitude. See, I have a divine power called 'sam-mohan' (literally a power to hypnotise someone and make the latter lose awareness or consciousness). It is a sort of weapon which can be used against an enemy in the battle-field, due to which the adversary falls unconscious, and then he can be easily conquered without bloodshed. I am granting it to you as my blessing, which please accept." In this way, Aja empowered

himself with this mystical weapon which would enable him to overcome all his adversaries in the way he wants.

Prince Aja arrived at king Bhoj's capital. The king welcomed his guest and arranged for his stay. In the morning, prince Aja got ready to attend the marriage ceremony of Indumati where other suitable princes were also invited to participate as competitors or candidates, from amongst whom one would be finally selected to marry the princess.

With this background information, let us now proceed with reading of Canto 5 of Kalidas' Raghuvansham in detail as follows--

Verse no. 1:

तमध्वरे विश्वजिति क्षितीशं निःशेषविश्राणितकोशजातम्
उत्पातविद्यो गुरुदक्षिणार्थी कौत्सः प्रपेदे वरतन्तुशिष्यः॥ ५-१

tamadhvare viśvajiti kṣitīśaṃ niḥśeṣaviśrāṇitakośajātam
utpātavidyo gurudakṣiṇārthī kautsaḥ prapede varatantuśiṣyaḥ || 5-1

5-1. Upon successful completion of his fire sacrifice to commemorate victory in his just-concluded campaign of conquering all the four directions of the land, king Raghu had given away all wealth that he had as charities and alms to seekers as was the tradition of the time, keeping nothing for himself.

At that time, a young celibate student named Kautsamuni or Kautsa-Rishi, who was a disciple of a great sage named Vartantu Rishi, came to king Raghu. This young boy had completed his studies under sage Vartantu, and wished to give some 'dakshina', or fees, to his learned teacher as a token of thanksgiving and gratitude. He needed 14 crore gold pieces for this purpose.

Since this young disciple had no recourses to fulfil this demand of his guru or teacher, he came to seek this wealth from king Raghu (as he had learnt that the king had just done some great landmark fire sacrifice where he had given huge amounts of wealth to whosoever came to seek anything from him).

[Note-- As it was a custom of those times that when a young student's education was completed, he was obliged to give something to his guru or teacher as a mark of thanksgiving and gratitude, so Kautsamuni asked his teacher Vartantu Rishi what he should be given as fees. Though the teacher knew that his disciple had no resources to give him anything, but when Kautsamuni insisted that he would not be satisfied unless he frees himself from this obligation to his teacher, the senior sage became angry, and out of frustration at his student's obstinate behaviour, he demanded 14 crores {1 crore = 10 million} gold pieces in return for all the 14 fields of knowledge he had given to his disciple as part of his comprehensive education.

The 14 branches of ancient Indian tradition of knowledge, called the 'Chaturdasha Vidya', covered the following subjects: the four Vedas (Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva), the six Vedangs (limbs of the Vedas), the Purans (ancient histories), Nyaya Shastra (law

and jurisprudence; logic), Mimansa (philosophy; interpretation and investigation), and Dharmashastra (laws governing Dharma--propriety, ethics, good conduct and thoughts in various fields that were based on the scriptures).

The six Vedangs are the knowledge required to understand and apply the knowledge of Vedas --i.e. Shiksha (phonetics, pronunciation), Kalpa (rituals), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology, philology), Chanda (metrics) and Jyotish (astronomy, astrology).

Sometimes, the six sub-Vedas, or subsidiary Vedas (body of knowledge) are modified as follows--Vyakaran (grammar that includes everything related to understanding the language of the Vedas and their composition), Jyotish (astronomy, astrology), Ayurveda (medicine; herbs), Dhanurveda (archery, military training), Gandharveda (dance, music, art of creating delusions, illusions and hypnotism), and Arthashastra (economy, diplomacy, politics).

From a modern perspective, the above traditional classification of the entire body of knowledge into 14 types of expertises, subjects or themes can be modified into 14 subjects as follows :

The Vedas + Upanishads + Itihas and Purans (history, including ancient history) + Nyaya Shastra (law, logic, jurisprudence) + Artha Shastra (economics) + Ayurveda (medicine, specially herb-based) + Dhanurveda (archery; military science, art of warfare) + Jyotish Shastra (astronomy, astrology) + Vyakaran (grammar, linguistic) + Rajniti Shastra (political science, diplomacy) + Vastu Shastra (architecture, construction) + Gandharava Vidya (music, dance, song) + Sammohan Vidya (magic, creation of illusion, hypnotism) + Mimansa (philosophy; interpretation and investigation) = 14.]

Verse no. 2:

स मृण्मये वीतहिरण्मयत्वात्पात्रे निधायार्घ्यमनर्घशीलः।

श्रुतप्रकाशं यशसा प्रकाशः प्रत्युज्जगामातिथिमातिथेयः॥ ५-२

sa mṛṇmaye vītahiraṇmayatvātpātre nidhāyārghyamanarghaśīlaḥ
śrutaprakāśaṁ yaśasā prakāśaḥ pratyujjagāmātithimātithēyaḥ || 5-2

5-2. Since king Raghu, who possessed immense good fame, had a most charitable and magnanimous nature, and was renowned for his excellent career and hospitality, had no wealth left with him, and therefore could not go to meet his visitor, the young student named Kautsamuni, with something such as water in a golden pot that should have been normally used for the purpose of welcoming an honourable guest by a king, so therefore king Raghu took some flowers, sacred kush grass, and some water in a clay or mud pot to go forward and welcome Kautsamuni who had a radiant countenance that reflected his wisdom and the depth of the knowledge of all the Vedas (scriptures) that he possessed.

Verse no. 3:

तमर्चयित्वा विधिवद्विधिज्ञस्तपोधनं मानधनाग्रयायी
विशांपतिर्विष्टरभाजमारात्कृताञ्जलिः कृत्यविदित्युवाच ॥ ५-३

tamarcayitvā vidhivadvidhijñastapodhanam mānadhanāgrayāyī
viśāmpatirviṣṭarabhājamārātkṛtāñjaliḥ kṛtyavidityuvāca || 5-3

5-3. King Raghu, who was foremost amongst those who were experts in all fields of knowledge, specially regarding one's duties, responsibilities and procedures of good conduct, and who regarded honour and self-respect as their greatest of wealth, joined the palms of his hands and offered his worship to the revered guest, sage Kautsamani, who was seated on a mat. Then the king spoke to him as follows--

Verse no. 4:

अप्यग्रणीर्मन्त्रकृतामृषीणां कुशाग्रबुद्धे कुशली गुरुस्ते
यतस्त्वया ज्ञानमशेषमाप्तं लोकेन चैतन्यमिवोष्णरश्मेः ॥ ५-४

apyagraṇīrmantrakṛtāmṛṣīṇāṃ kuśāgrabuddhe kuśalī guruste
yatastvayā jñānamaśeṣamāptaṃ lokena caitanyamivoṣṇaraśmeḥ || 5-4

5-4. The king said to sage Kautsamani: "Oh wise and learned sage with a sharp intellect (kuśāgrabuddhe)! Is your guru (teacher)-- who is an expert in Mantras of the Vedas and has put them in practice, who is foremost amongst great sages, and from whom you have acquired a rich wealth of knowledge-- alright; is he hale-and-heartly? I wish to know about his welfare.

He is an enlightened teacher who has imparted such great wealth of knowledge to you that now you too have become wise, enlightened and self-realised yourself, just like the case of a sleeping person is woken up by the light of sun in the morning.

[Note--The name of the guru or teacher was sage Vartantu (refer verse no. 1).

When a person is asleep, he remains unaware of anything happening outside. For all practical purposes he is deemed to be ignorant of all realities. But when the day dawns and the sunlight falls on him, he wakes up from his sleep and sees the world clearly.

Likewise, when a person acquires knowledge under a learned teacher, a vast and colourful world of opportunities and fascinating things open before him like a panoramic landscape of which he had no knowledge earlier. The knowledge of the different branches of scriptures acts to transform what earlier was an ignorant and illiterate man into someone who is sought after and well respected in the society for his wisdom, knowledge, skills, intelligence and good advice. He acquires honour and respect in the world as opposed to an uneducated person.

From the perspective of philosophy and spiritualism, a person learned in the scriptures becomes wise, self-aware and enlightened, someone who acts as the sun to lighten up the rest of the world by eliminating darkness of ignorance and replacing it with illumination of knowledge.

In this analogy, the sleeping man is like an ignorant person who knows nothing although everything is there and available to him. When the sun rises and shines its light on the sleeping man, he wakes up to see the beautiful world and its opportunities all around him. Similarly, acquisition of knowledge fills a person with joy and happiness at the vast and colourful world of opportunities that awaits him to be explored and enjoyed.]

Verse no. 5:

**कायेन वाचा मनसा शश्वद्यत्संभृतं वासवधैर्यलोपि।
आपाद्यते न व्ययमन्तरायैः कच्चिन्महर्षेस्त्रिविधं तपस्तत्॥ ५-५**

kāyena vācā manasāoi śaśvadyatsambhṛtaṁ vāsavadhairyalopi
āpādyate na vyayamantarāyaiḥ kaccinmaharṣestrividhaṁ tapastat || 5-5

5-5. Your revered guru (teacher; sage Vartantu) has accumulated incredible merit by doing Tapa (penance and austerity), by the virtue of which he has acquired threefold powers related to the body, mind and speech. This might have alarmed Indra (the king of gods) who is always wary of sages acquiring great powers and abilities as he thinks himself threatened by them. So therefore, please assure me that your guru is well and free from any such disturbances.

[Note--Indra is in the bad habit of becoming jealous of anyone who acquires any kind of supernatural powers such as those possessed by great sages, and even looks suspiciously at any king or warrior who acquires some stupendous achievements in any field, specially those related to strength and military skills. Indra fears them because he thinks that they might challenge him and usurp his throne of heaven. It's so stupid of him, but it is his bad habit nonetheless.

The three powers related to body, mind and speech referred to above are the following: (a) Mind--physical stamina leading to endurance and vigour, as well as a robust health, freedom from diseases, and not being being afflicted by injuries and wounds of all kinds. It also includes the ability to go anywhere without restriction, and remain immune to weather and all kinds of outside changes. (b) Mind--alertness, intelligence, wisdom, learning, memory, cognitive functions etc. It also includes ability to do meditation and undertake contemplation. (c) Speech--articulation, clarity, tone and tenor of what is being said. Ability to speak diplomatically, skilfully, convincingly, and in a manner that attracts others and enthralls them. From the traditional view-point, it includes recitation of long passages from the Vedas and other scriptures fluently. Giving discourses and participating in discussions.

It will be obvious here that all the three elements of body (e.g. body language), mind (memory, recall, logic) as well as speech (words actually spoken by a person) work in sync for a perfect and proper delivery of ideas and knowledge to make a positive and lasting impression of a person.]

Verse no. 6:

आधारबन्धप्रमुखैः प्रयत्नैः संवर्धितानां सुतनिर्विशेषम्]

कच्चिन्न वाय्वादिरुपप्लवो वः श्रमच्छिदामाश्रमपादपानाम्॥ ५-६

ādhārabandhapramukhaiḥ prayatnaiḥ samvardhitānām sutanirviśeṣam
kaccinna vāyvādirupaplavo vaḥ śramacchidāmāśramapādapānām || 5-6

5-6. The trees of your guru's hermitage have been duly cared for by him, from their initial planting to their daily tending which includes watering and addition of manure if the need so arises, like one cares for one's children. These trees give shelter to travellers as well as provide cool shade to the residents of the hermitage.

So tell me, are these trees safe, and not subject to any harm from any quarter, such as natural calamities like storms and hails, or from some rogue who cuts them and harms them in any other way, or some animal who destroys them?

[Note--A sage's hermitage is surrounded by trees with rich foliage, and often bearing fruits of different varieties, as well as grass and small or big flowering plants. This makes the place a rich area of greenery where travellers often would go to seek rest and comfort during their long journeys. The trees also gave cool shade to the residents of the hermitage.

The resident sages take good care of these trees and plants; they prune the grass and keep the area neat and tidy.

So, king Raghu wondered if there was something wrong for which sage Vartantu had sent his disciple to seek the king's help.]

Verse no. 7:

क्रियानिमित्तेष्वपि वत्सलत्वादभग्नकामा मुनिभिः कुशेषु]

तदङ्कशय्याच्युतनाभिनाला कच्चिन्मृगीणामनघा प्रसूतिः॥ ५-७

kriyānimitteśvapi vatsalatvādabhagnakāmā munibhiḥ kuśeṣu
tadaṅkaśayyācyutanābhinālā kaccinmṛgīṇāmanaghā prasūtiḥ || 5-7

5-7. Are the young fawns of does whom the sages love and care for so much that they often give them birth in their own laps, and don't even get annoyed at them when they eat kush grass which the sages had collected to do their rituals--are all such fawns and does alright?

[Note--Like the trees planted by these sages are loved by them, the lovely and playful fawns and does are also loved by them. These humble animals add life, energy and colour to the hermitage. They also help the sages to keep themselves engaged in some sort of worldly activity not related to their spiritual pursuits, as well as a means of diversion from the routine that acts as a source of entertainment.

Just like a nurse delivers a baby and immediately lifts it lovingly in her arms, these sages would lift the new-born fawn and make it sit in their laps.]

Verse no. 8:

निर्वत्यते यैर्नियमाभिषेको येभ्यो निवापाञ्जलयः पितृणाम्
तान्युच्छृष्टाङ्कितसैकतानि शिवानि वस्तीर्थजलानि कच्चित्॥ ५-८

nirvatyate yairniyamābhiṣeko yebhyo nivāpāñjalayaḥ pitṛṇām
tānyuñchaṣṭhāṅkitasaikatāni śivāni vastīrthajalāni kaccit || 5-8

5-8. Learned sages like yourself and your revered guru (teacher) use holy waters from various pilgrim sites to take their daily baths and offer libations to dead ancestors with such sanctified waters, and at the time of annual gathering at such pilgrim sites they faithfully declare that a sixth part (ṣaṣṭhāṅkita) of the produce of their farms (at their hermitages) during the year would be donated to the king for use of the subjects of the kingdom--say, are all such places and water bodies (such as holy rivers, lakes, tanks, ponds etc.) are safe from any kind of pollution or disrespect or desecration shown at the hands of non-believers or evil-minded persons? {Should this be the case, just tell me, and I will ensure justice is done and the culprit is punishment.}

[Note--This verse points out to a very important tradition of the time--the sages who had hermitages, where students and other sages lived as a community, maintained farms where different crops, vegetables, fruit trees and flowers were grown so that the hermitage could become self-sustaining and self-supporting as far as food and other things needed for daily life and worship rituals were concerned. And all such hermitages would donate a sixth part of their annual produce of crop to the king as tribute just like ordinary farmers would do. In return, the king provided them protection and patronage.]

Verse no. 9:

नीवारपाकादि कङ्गरीयैरामृश्यते जानपदैर्न कच्चित्
कालोपपन्नातिथिकल्प्यभागं वन्यं शरीरस्थितिसाधनं वः॥ ५-९

nīvārapākādi kaṇḍgarīyairāmrśyate jānapadairna kaccit
kālopapannātithikalpyabhāgaṁ vanyaṁ śarīrasthitisādhanaṁ vaḥ || 5-9

5-9. After you sages have made offerings to the Supreme Being from the crop grown in your hermitage's farms, you keep a part of it aside to feed any guest who might come visiting you. These crops are stored in the barns in your hermitages. Tell me if any herbivorous animal of the surrounding forest, or cattle of the neighbouring farmers who are accustomed to eating straw and husk, come to eat your crops that are still in the farms, either growing or ready for harvesting, or have been gathered and stored at your hermitages for use as and when needed? {If your crops are harmed in any way, then please do let me know and I will make good for the loss, and ensure that no harm is done in the future.}

Verse no. 10:

अपि प्रसन्नेन महर्षिणा त्वं सम्यग्विनीयानुमतो गृहाय
कालो ह्ययं संक्रमितुं द्वितीयं सर्वोपकारक्षममाश्रमं ते॥ ५-१०

api prasannena maharṣiṇā tvaṁ samyagvinīyānumato grhāya
kālo hyayaṁ saṁkramitum dvitīyaṁ sarvopakāraṁsamamāśramaṁ te || 5-10

5-10. Has sage Vartantu cheerfully given you his permission to enter the next phase of life as a householder, known as 'Grihastashram', after you had successfully completed your education under him? Because your age is appropriate to embark on the next phase of life as a householder once the first phase, known as 'Brahmachari', during which a person is expected to devote his time and energy to study under some learned teacher, is over. {Is your revered guru happy with you? Is he satisfied with you and your conduct, as well as your ability to acquire the body of knowledge that he had imparted to you? I hope there is no problem between you two.}

[Note--According to ancient tradition, a person's life is roughly divided into four segments--Brahmcharya Ashram, Grihastha Ashram, Vanprastha Ashram, and Sanyas Ashram. Each quarter was of approximately 20-25 years.

The first quarter is when a man was supposed to study and learn the skills that are needed for the affairs of an adult life. This was 'Brahmcharya Ashram'. The word literally means a celibate, someone who exercises self-restraint and focuses his energy in acquiring knowledge and skills needed for future life. This phase in a person's life was essentially meant for study and inculcating skills which require focus of mind and heart. During this time, the man is young and is supposed to observe austerities while he studies and acquires knowledge to equip him to face the world when he grows up

The second quarter is 'Grihastha Ashram'. It is when the student enters the household phase of life. He marries, raises a family and carries on with his profession or vocation to increase wealth and progeny. He engages himself in his chosen trade, profession or vocation to support his family as well as the society at large; this is the time when he generates wealth, both for his own family as well as for the society.

When a person becomes ripe in age, his working capacity decreases and he must prepare to pass on the baton to the next generation, to his heirs when they are ready to step in his shoes, and when he has done his bit for society. This is the 'Vanprastha Ashram'—the third phase of life when a person prepares to hand the responsibilities of his worldly affairs to his heirs and mentally prepares himself to lead a calm and detached life so that he can get ready for the final phase of old age.

Though it literally means 'heading for the forest', but not necessarily it be so. Its primary function is to withdraw from playing an active role in the affairs of the world and give one's mind and body rest and peace after the toil of the previous years. In ancient times though, it actually meant going to the forest and spending time in a serene place in some hermitage. But in modern times it is neither feasible nor advisable. The best avenue is to withdraw from active role and serve more as an advisor and guide for the next generation in a dispassionate manner. In this phase, a person is expected to willingly

hands over his worldly duties and responsibilities to his heirs, free himself from worldly entanglements and attachments, and start devoting his time on spiritual pursuits. The word, in the context of ancient traditions, means heading to the forest, but it is only literal in its meaning, for the basic idea is to distance one's self from worldly engagements and lead a life away from it. So therefore in practice, even if one remains at home but keeps himself aloof from the grossness of the outside world, he is said to have embraced the Vanprastha Ashram.

The final and fourth quarter is called 'Sanyas Ashram' which clearly means absolute withdrawal from the world and its affairs. This is the time when the man is of about say 70 or more years of age. So he needs complete peace and should prepare to make an exit from the world without a fuss. He is expected to create such a situation that no one misses or wails for him nor anything suffers due to his absence. Thus, he dies peacefully and self-contentedly. During the 'Sanyas Ashram' a person is expected to completely renounce the world and its entanglements, and instead spend the remaining part of his life in spiritual pursuit and searching ways for his spiritual liberation and deliverance.]

Verse no. 11:

तवार्हतो नाभिगमेन तृप्तं मनो नियोगक्रिययोत्सुकं मे।
अप्याज्ञया शासितुरात्मना वा प्राप्तोऽसि संभावयितुं वनान्माम्॥ ५-११

tavārhatō nābhigamēna tr̥ptam̐ mano niyogakriyayotsukam̐ me
apyājñayā śāsiturātmanā vā prāpto'si sambhāvayitum̐ vanānmām || 5-11

5-11. Though your visit in itself is most welcome and auspicious for me, yet it is not enough, and I will be more happy if I hear you give me some orders or make a request that I need to fulfil. I am very eager to hear any such order or request from you. Please do tell me, therefore, have you come here on your guru's orders, or have you come to me on your own initiative? {For I am willing to carry out any order you or your guru give me. So, please don't hesitate to tell me what your wish is.}

[Note--King Raghu was very wise and intelligent. He knew that when anyone visits him, the guest has some expectations from him. This was normal for king Raghu. So, he guessed that the young sage Kautsamuni, who had just graduated from a senior sage Vartantu's hermitage, must have some request and expectations from the king when he came to visit him.]

Verse no. 12:

इत्यर्घ्यपात्रानुमितव्ययस्य रघोरुदारामपि गां निशम्य।
स्वार्थोपपत्तिं प्रति दुर्बलाशस्तमित्यवोचद्वरतन्तुशिष्यः॥ ५-१२

ityarghyapātrānumitavyayasya raghorudārāmapī gāṁ niśamya
svārthopapattim prati durbalāśastamityavocadvaratantuśiṣyaḥ || 5-12

5-12. When the young sage Kautsamuni observed that king Raghu was holding a clay pot filled with consecrated water to welcome him (instead of a golden vessel that a king would normally use while welcoming a guest-of-honour)¹, which implied that he had already given away all the wealth that he had accumulated as gifts and tributes during his successful military campaign to conquer all the four directions, and therefore had nothing left with him with which he would be able to meet the young sage's demands (of 14 crore gold pieces needed as fees to be paid to his guru, sage Vartantu, the very purpose for which the young boy had come to meet king Raghu), he became hopeless.

But still, since the king had asked him, the young sage deemed it fit to reply very cautiously (in a polite tone that would not put the king in an embarrassing situation).

[Note--¹Refer: verse no. 2 herein above.]

Verse no. 13:

सर्वत्र नो वार्तमवेहि राजन्नाथे कुतस्त्वय्यशुभं प्रजानाम्
सूर्ये तपत्यावरणाय दृष्टेः कल्पेत लोकस्य कथं तमिस्रा॥ ५-१३

sarvatra no vārtamavehi rājannāthe kutastvayyaśubhaṁ prajānām
sūrye tapatyāvaraṇāya dr̥ṣṭeḥ kalpeta lokasya katham tamisrā || 5-13

5-13. The young sage said: "Oh king! You must know that everything is fine with all of us (at the hermitage). Say, with an excellent, most gracious and honourable king of your status, how can any of your subjects have any kind of problem whatsoever? So therefore, none of us have any problems or issues; everything is well and fine.

Say, can darkness ever shroud anyone when the sun is shining brilliantly overhead? {Just as the presence of the sun ensures there is no trace of darkness anywhere, so is the case with all of us who are your subjects when you are there to protect and take care of us. It is out of the question that any of your subjects is suffering in any way whatever, as long as you are our king and patron!}

[Note--In this verse, king Raghu is likened to the sun, and troubles of his subjects are likened to the darkness. Both can't co-exist. If there is sunlight, there cannot be darkness. So likewise, when king Raghu is there, there is no question of any of his subjects suffering from any sort of trouble.]

Verse no. 14:

**भक्तिः प्रतीक्ष्येषु कुलोचिता ते पूर्वान्महाभाग तयातिशेषे|
व्यतीतकालस्त्वहमभ्युपेतस्त्वामर्थिभावादिति मे विषादः॥ ५-१४**

bhaktiḥ pratīkṣyeṣu kulocitā te pūrvānmahābhāga tayātiśeṣe
vyatītakālastvahamabhyupetastvāmarthibhāvāditi me viṣādaḥ || 5-14

5-14. To have reverence for elders and be devoted to saintly people has always been a worthy tradition in your noble family since ages, and you excel in this virtue. But I regret that I have come to you too late with an objective in mind (that I too would receive some donation from you that would help fulfil my own obligation), because I had heard that you have been extremely charitably in giving away alms and making donations liberally at the end of your recently concluded Vedic rituals to commemorate your victory over all the four directions of the earth.

{Unfortunately, you have given away everything that you had, and now you don't have anything left with you that you could give me. This is why I regret coming to you, as I feel you would be embarrassed if I ask anything from you at this juncture, as you simply can't fulfil my needs. Had I known it earlier, I wouldn't have disturbed your conscience.}

[Note--The young Brahamachari student named Kautsamuni has subtly hinted to king Raghu that he had come to the latter seeking some wealth because he was in need of it, but as the king has already given away everything that he could donate, with nothing more left that could be given to this new seeker, so therefore it would be unwise and there would be no sense in embarrassing the host by demanding anything which the latter would not be able to give.

But this hint was enough for Raghu. By now it was clear to the king that the young sage has come to him with no other objective but to seek some wealth for some urgent purpose, which he now feels hesitant to disclose as he has discovered that the king has nothing left with him.]

Verse no. 15:

**शरीरमात्रेण नरेन्द्र तिष्ठन्नाभासि तीर्थप्रतिपादितर्द्धिः|
आरण्यकोपात्तफलप्रसूतिः स्तम्बेन नीवार इवावशिष्टः॥ ५-१५**

5-15. Oh king! After having given away everything that you possessed as charities at the end of the Vedic ritual you recently concluded, with nothing left with you but your own bare body that you still possess, it reminds one of the case of corn and rice stalks which become bare after they have been stripped of all the grains of rice and corn that have been harvested by the forest-dwelling farmers and sages living in hermitages.

{Once the grain is removed, only the stalk remains. The worth of these plants lie in the grain and not the empty stalk. The grain are the assets of a crop, while the stalk is where these grain are found. Likewise, the wealth of king Raghu marks his richness, and

he is the one who is called wealthy only as long as he possesses the wealth, for after that he is as bare as the stalk from which the grain is removed.}

[Note--The grains of corn and rice plants are their assets, and after all the grain is removed, only the stalk remains. Likewise, after giving away all wealth that king Raghu possessed, he had only his physical body that he could call as his own.]

Verse no. 16:

स्थाने भवानेकनराधिपः सन्नकिञ्चनत्वं मखजं व्यनक्ति।

पर्यायपीतस्य सुरैर्हिमांशोः कलाक्षयः श्लाघ्यतरो हि वृद्धेः॥ ५-१६

sthāne bhavānekanarādhīpaḥ sannakiñcanatvaṁ makhajaṁ vyanakti
paryāyapītasya surairhimāṁśoḥ kalākṣayaḥ ślāghyataro hi vṛddheḥ || 5-16

5-16. Though you are an undisputed monarch of all the four directions, and therefore there ought to be no shortage of anything for you, yet now you are penniless as if you were a helpless destitute. It is not a matter of shame for you, but a matter of great pride and honour, and this situation stands to your credit rather than discredit you in any way, because you have not spent your wealth on yourself but have liberally donated everything that you possessed by way of alms and charities as part of a Vedic ritual you undertook recently. This deed is laudable and worthy of great praise.

It is like the case of the nectar stored in the moon, which the gods partake of from time to time, leading the moon to shrink during its waning phase. Since the moon's nectar sustains the gods and is selflessly given by the moon-god to his compatriots, without keeping anything for himself, it's considered a noble deed, and as a result of this magnanimity and benevolence of his, the moon begins to wax from the next day, implying that all his depleted stock of nectar gets reimbursed gradually over time till the day when the moon's pitcher of nectar is full during the full moon night.

[Note--The moon is regarded as a heavenly pitcher of ambrosia. Just like a vessel of glass would clearly show how much milk is in it, so does this heavenly vessel shows the amount of nectar is there in it. The gods drink this nectar, and gradually the level of the liquid goes down and its volume diminishes over time of fourteen days that at the end of this period the moon's pitcher is empty. This is why the moon wanes during a fortnight. When its vessel is empty, the gods bless it so that it begins to get filled once again over the next fortnight till it regains its full original content of ambrosia on the full moon's night.

By using this analogy, it is meant that though king Raghu is left with nothing at present, but his wealth would gradually come back to him over time, and sooner rather than later he would be wealthy once again. It will happen because he had spent his wealth selflessly in an honourable, ethical manner, and for a good cause, by making charities and donations as part of his religious duties during a fire sacrifice. Had it been otherwise, had he frittered away his wealth on self-indulgences or extravagance, in pomp-and-show, or any other pursuit that could be categorised as irreligious and unscrupulous, or as being

unbecoming or un-behaving of a great, wise, intelligent and righteous emperor, then there might have been a big question mark of his ever regaining his wealth again; but this question does not arise at all in his particular case.]

Verse no. 17:

तदन्यतस्तावदनन्यकार्यो गुर्वर्थमाहर्तुमहं यतिष्ये।
स्वस्त्यस्तु ते निर्गलिताम्बुगर्भं शरद्घनं नार्दति चातकोऽपि॥ ५-१७

tadanyatastāvadananyakāryo gurvarthamāhartumahaṁ yatiṣye
svastyastu te nirgalitāmbugarbhaṁ śaradghanaṁ nārdati cātako'pi || 5-17

5-17. Oh king! My only wish is to collect just enough wealth by which I can pay my fees to my teacher, and nothing more. Just like the Chatak bird expects a few drops of rain-water from the cloud that appears first in the sky so that it can quench its thirst, and expects nothing else from the cloud, and in case the first cloud is unable to fulfil the bird's needs, the bird would seek rain-water from another cloud when the latter appears overhead in the sky, so likewise I came to you to seek alms to pay my teacher's fees, but since unfortunately you are unable to satisfy my needs, I will seek someone else, some other patron for this purpose.

Meanwhile, I bless you and wish you all the best."

[Note-- The Chatak bird: The Chatak (pied cuckoo) is a special species of bird that would drink only drops of rain water, especially that which falls during the constellation called Swati Nakhshatra, which is the fifteenth asterism known as Arcturus, that occurs only during the winter season. This bird would prefer to die of thirst rather than to drink any other type of water. It would drink only those rain drops that fall directly in its open mouth, and so it keeps its head tilted towards the sky when the rain-bearing clouds appear overhead, waiting for the chance of the first droplets of rain released by the cloud to fall directly in its beak even before the other rain-drops reach the ground around it.

Perhaps this was the first time in his career that king Raghu faced such a piquant situation that left him red-faced and embarrassed. No one, especially a young Brahmachari, had ever gone back from his door with unfulfilled desires. It touched a raw nerve in the king, and he instantly made up his mind that no matter what happens, he would, by any means, fulfil the student's demand of 14 crore golden pieces which he was supposed to give as fees to his teacher.]

Verse no. 18:

एतावदुक्त्वा प्रतियातुकामं शिष्यं महर्षेर्नृपतिर्निषिध्य।
किं वस्तु विद्वन्गुरवे प्रदेयं त्वया कियद्वेति तमन्वयुङ्क्त॥ ५-१८

etāvaduktvā pratiyātukāmaṁ śiṣyaṁ maharṣernṛpatirniṣidhya
kiṁ vastu vidvāngurave pradeyaṁ tvayā kiyadveti tamanvayunṅkta || 5-18

5-18. After that, Kautsa got up to leave, when king Raghu politely intercepted him. The king asked him: "Oh scholarly sage! Please wait for a while and tell me what is it that you want to give to your teacher, and how much."

Verse no. 19:

ततो यथावद्विहिताध्वराय तस्मै स्मयावेशविवर्जिताय।
वर्णाश्रमाणां गुरवे स वर्णी विचक्षणः प्रस्तुतमाचक्षे॥ ५-१९

tato yathāvadvihitādhvarāya tasmai smayāveśavivarjitāya
varṇāśramāṇāṃ gurave sa varṇī vicakṣaṇaḥ prastutamācacakṣe || 5-19

5-19. Then the scholarly Brahmachari, Kautsamuni, told the selfless king Raghu who had no vanity or pride in him, and who had performed a Vedic fire sacrifice diligently in accordance with religiously sanctioned procedures, the details of the objective of his visiting the king.

Verse no. 20:

समाप्तविद्येन मया महर्षिर्विज्ञापितोऽभूद्गुरुदक्षिणायै।
स मे चिरायास्खलितोपचारां तां भक्तिमेवागणयत्पुरस्तात्॥ ५-२०

samāptavidyena mayā maharṣirvijñāpito'bhūdgurudakṣiṇāyai
sa me cirāyāskhalitopacārāṃ tāṃ bhaktimevāgaṇayatpurastāt || 5-20

5-20. Kautsamuni said to king Raghu: "After having studied for a long time under the guardianship of the exalted senior sage Vartantu, when I completed my education and graduated with knowledge of all the Vidyas (different subjects, branches and streams of knowledge), then at the time of departure from the sage's hermitage I requested him to accept some fees from me as a token of my thanksgiving and gratitude towards him.

Initially he did not want anything in return, and said that the faithful service that I had rendered unto him over the years was the best kind of fees a student could give to his teacher, and therefore, it was more than enough, and I need not worry about giving him something more as a fee.

Verse no. 21:

निर्बन्धसंजातरुषार्थकार्श्यमचिन्तयित्वा गुरुणाहमुक्तः।
वित्तस्य विद्यापरिसंख्यया मे कोटीश्चतस्रो दश चाहरेति॥ ५-२१

nirbandhasamjātaruṣārthakārśyamacintayitvā guruṇāhamuktaḥ
vittasya vidyāparisaṁkhyayā me koṭīscatasro daśa cāhareti || 5-21

5-21. In my foolishness, I kept on insisting that my guru (teacher, sage Vartatnu) accept some fees from me in return for the education he gave me. My constant request irritated the learned sage, and out of frustration he demanded that I give him 14 crore gold pieces for the 14 branches of knowledge that I gained from him, inspite of knowing that I am a penniless young student who has no financial means to meet the demand.

{I have no grudge against my revered teacher. It was my own stupidity that appeared to portray me as being stubborn, haughty and disobedient. I should have obeyed his words that he does not want anything from me, but my insistence annoyed him. It's all my fault and lack of experience in such matters. I ought to have bowed before him and promise to return to gift him something later on in life when I begin to earn. But it's too late now, and the damage has been done.}

Verse no. 22:

सोऽहं सपर्याविधिभाजनेन मत्वा भवन्तं प्रभुशब्दशेषम्
अभ्युत्सहे संप्रति नोपरोद्धुमल्पेतरत्वाच्छ्रुतनिष्क्रयस्य॥ ५-२२

so'ham saparyāvidhibhājanena matvā bhavantaṁ prabhuśabdaśeṣam
abhyutsahe saṁprati noparoddhumalpetaratvācchrutaniṣkrayasya || 5-22

5-22. When I saw you welcoming me with water and flowers in an earthen pot (instead of golden vessel that a king uses to welcome his guest), I instantly realised that you don't have the wherewithal to satisfy my needs, because the amount of fees I need to give to my teacher as demanded by him is certainly beyond your means in the present circumstances. At present, you are a monarch just for name's sake (but in practice you are a penniless person as I am).

{Oh king! Had I been aware of this reality, I wouldn't have come to you to embarrass you. I am very sorry for that. I would have gone back, but you wished to know the purpose for which I had come to you (verse nos. 11-18). If I hadn't replied to you, it would have sounded too rude on my part, and since I didn't wish to beat-around-the-bush by telling you something that would have been fundamentally wrong or a lie, as that would have been another foolishness on my part after the first fiasco with my teacher, I had to tell you what I needed. Oh great king, please excuse me for it for now I regret it very much.}

Verse no. 23:

इत्थं दिवजेन दिवजराजकान्तिरावेदितो वेदविदां वरेण
एनोनिवृत्तेन्द्रियवृत्तिरेनं जगाद भूयो जगदेकनाथः॥ ५-२३

itthaṁ dvijena dvijarājakāntirāvedito vedavidāṁ vareṇa
enonivṛttendriyavṛttirenaṁ jagāda bhūyo jagadekanāthaḥ || 5-23

5-23. When king Raghu, who was fair, soothing and radiant as the full moon, who had an immaculate character and reputation, and who was the sole monarch of all the four directions (as he had conquered all the four directions during his recently concluded military campaign), heard what Kautsamuni, who was learned in the Vedas and its branches, and whose knowledge was reflected in his self-confidence and brilliant countenance, had said, he (the king) replied as follows--

Verse no. 24:

गुर्वर्थमर्थी श्रुतपारदृश्वा रघोः सकाशादनवाप्य कामम्
गतो वदान्यान्तरमित्ययं मे मा भूत्परीवादनवावतारः॥ ५-२४

gurvarthamarthī śrutapāradrśvā raghoḥ sakāśādanavāpya kāmam
gato vadānyāntaramityayaṁ me mā bhūtparīvādanavāvatārah || 5-24

5-24. The king said to the scholar: "Oh Kautsamuni! Let this infamy, dishonour and ignominy, 'that when a young scholar who was highly educated in all the branches of the scriptures and had acquired relevant skills, approached emperor Raghu, the monarch of the world, for some help so that he could pay his fees to his teacher, he had to go back empty-handed from the door of Raghu because the king could not meet his request, and so therefore the helpless seeker had to go from one door to another to seek help', not put an indelible mark of shame, disgrace and embarrassment on my name and honour!

{It has never ever been in my life that a seeker had to return from me without having his request fulfilled. There would be no other thing as shameful and disgraceful for me as this happening. So please have patience while I arrange for your required amount of gold pieces.}

Verse no. 25:

स त्वं प्रशस्ते महिते मदीये वसंश्चतुर्थोऽग्निरिवाग्निगारे
द्वित्राण्यहान्यर्हसि सोढुमर्हन् यावद्यते साधयितुं त्वदर्थम्॥ ५-२५

sa tvaṁ praśaste mahite madīye vasaṁścaturtho'gnirivāgnigāre
dvitrāṇyahānyarhasi soḍhumarhan yāvadyate sādhayitum tvadartham || 5-25

5-25. Hence, oh venerable young sage, it is my most humble request to you that please abide here and take rest in the guest quarters at the venue of my fire sacrifice, in a symbolic form of the 'fourth fire', for two or three days, while I make efforts to meet your needs."

[Note--A learned scholar who is well-versed in the Vedas and all other branches of knowledge is deemed to be as holy and sanctified as the 'fire' itself. Here, Kautsamuni is treated as the 'fourth fire', because the other 'three holy fires' are the ones found in the sky, the earth and the subterranean worlds.

An interesting observation can be made here--and it is that 'wisdom, knowledge, character, learning, intelligence, self-realisation, self-control, penance, austerity etc.' are all glorious virtues that make a person as holy, pure and immaculate as the fire itself. This is why the learned king Raghu calls Kautsamuni a personified form of the holy fire.

During the conduct of the rituals associated with the fire sacrifice, all the forms of the fire-god are invoked to participate. Besides this, great sages, scholars, wise men and elderly Brahmins are also invited from all the directions. So it is expected that the king must have made arrangements for their lodging and food during this exercise. It is in one such guest-house that he asked Kautsamuni to live for a few days.]

Verse no. 26:

तथेति तस्यावितथं प्रतीतः प्रत्यग्रहीत्संगरमग्रजन्मा
गामात्तसारां रघुरप्यवेक्ष्य निष्क्रष्टुमर्थं चकमे कुबेरात्॥ ५-२६

tatheti tasyāvitatham pratītaḥ pratyagrahītsaṅgaramagrajanmā
gāmāttasārāṁ raghurapyavekṣya niṣkraṣṭumarthaṁ cakame kuberāt || 5-26

5-26. The young scholar Kautsamuni, though amazed at the king's confidence, courage and determination, was very glad, and so he politely accepted the king's offer to wait a while so that the king could arrange for the needed gold pieces.

In the meanwhile, king Raghu thought the matter over and came to the conclusion that since earth and its kings (whom he had already conquered) lacked the wherewithal and the resources to meet the demand of the young scholar, therefore it would be necessary for him to approach Kuber, the treasurer of heaven, to seek from him the wealth that was needed.

[Note--The young scholar was awe-struck and wondered how king Raghu would manage to arrange for such a large number of gold pieces at such short notice when he had nothing with him. A truth dawned on him--he now knew why and how the exalted king succeeded in conquering all the kings of the four directions. King Raghu had immense self-confidence, honour, courage, grit, determination, bravery and dare-devilry, as well as a never-say-no, never-say-not-possible, and never-say-die attitude and outlook towards everything in this world. This was a lesson for Kautsamuni, as mere bookish knowledge of the scriptures wasn't enough to succeed in life.]

Verse no. 27:

वसिष्ठमन्त्रोक्षणजात्प्रभावादुदन्वदाकाशमहीधरेषु
मरुत्सखस्येव बलाहकस्य गतिर्विजघ्ने न हि तद्रथस्य॥ ५-२७

vasiṣṭhamantrokaṣaṇajātprabhāvādudanvadākāśamahīdhareṣu
marutsakhasyeva balāhakasya gativijaghne na hi tadrathasya || 5-27

5-27. Just like the clouds have the ability to go anywhere in the sky without hindrance by the blessings of the wind-god (for it is on the back of the wind that the cloud moves across the sky), so likewise it was due to the blessings of sage Vashistha (the royal priest) and by the magical (or mystical) powers possessed by the sacred water that the sage had sprinkled on king Raghu at the time of the ritual of his coronation on the throne, and which powers were now transferred to the king by virtue of this ritual, he had gained unhindered access to all parts of the world, including the earth and the heaven.

[Note--It is for this reason that king Raghu could go to heaven as easily as he could go to any part of earth, and return victorious. This was no small blessing, as it had enabled him to conquer all the four quarters of the world known at that time. Only the king of heaven was spared from this campaign. So, the king thought that perhaps destiny wished him to conquer heaven also so that he goes down in the annals of history as the undisputed monarch of the earth as well as the heaven.

Since it was just a while ago that during his military campaign he had already got from all the kings as much tribute as they could afford to give him, it would be unethical and unrighteous for him now to seek anything more from them, as it would be tantamount to greed and extortion. However, Kuber was an exception as Raghu had by-passed heaven from his just completed campaign, probable due to his deference for the gods.

Since what he now seeks is for some noble cause, such as giving donation to a scholar for fulfilling his obligations to pay fees to his teacher, there was no harm from asking Kuber to give this wealth as a mark of charity.

If there is no wind, the clouds would not be able to move at all. So by using this analogy, the poet Kalidas makes it clear that all the achievements of king Raghu were because of the mystical powers that were bestowed upon him by his learned guru, sage Vashistha, by the help of powerful mantras.]

Verse no. 28:

अथाधिशिष्ये प्रयतः प्रदोषे रथं रघुः कल्पितशस्त्रगर्भम्
सामन्तसंभावनयैव धीरः कैलासनाथं तरसा जिगीषुः॥ ५-२८

athādhiśiṣye prayataḥ pradoṣe ratham raghuḥ kalpitaśastragarbham
sāmantasambhāvanayaiva dhīraḥ kailāsanātham tarasā jigīṣuḥ || 5-28

5-28. After that, king Raghu, who was known for his patience and resilience, and who never lost courage in the face of adversities, armed himself for a campaign to win Kuber, and it being an auspicious time to embark on such a mission, he mounted his war chariot and slept peacefully on it for the night, because such campaigns are conducted in the day-time and not during the darkness of the night.

[Note--Only demons, called 'nishaa-chars', move in the darkness of the night to attack. A man worth his name and honour would not do so, as it would be a cowardly and shameful act to attack someone in the darkness of the night. Bold and courageous warriors face their opponents in broad daylight. All ancient wars were fought in day-time, and all hostilities stopped with the setting of the sun.

Since the time was auspicious, king Raghu decided to board his war chariot, fully armed, as a symbolic departure for a military campaign, but since it was already night he had to wait till day-break. So he decided to take some sleep and rest. This very fact that he 'slept' prior to the next day's military campaign clearly proves he had no tension in his mind as he was certain that he would achieve his targeted objective successfully.]

Verse no. 29:

प्रातः प्रयाणाभिमुखाय तस्मै सविस्मयाः कोषगृहे नियुक्ताः।

हिरण्मयीं कोषगृहस्य मध्ये वृष्टिं शशंसुः पतितां नभस्तः॥ ५-२९

prātaḥ prayāṇābhimukhāya tasmai savismayāḥ koṣagr̥he niyuktāḥ
hiraṇmayīm koṣagr̥hasya madhye vṛṣṭim śaśamsuḥ patitām nabhastāḥ || 5-29

5-29. In the morning, no sooner king Raghu got ready to depart for heaven to launch a military campaign to win Kuber, than the royal guards of his treasury came running to him, full of astonishment and excitement, to report that there was a rain of gold pieces from the sky on the royal treasury during the night (and it is not only full but even overflowing with gold).

[Note--As soon as Kuber got the wind that the mighty and invincible king Raghu, who at the same time was very generous, charitable and gracious, would come in the morning to exact tribute from him, not for himself but for a young sage who needs this wealth to pay his teacher, Kuber was overwhelmed. He thought to himself that this king had given away every single penny he had with him as charity and alms during a religious fire sacrifice so much so that he is now penniless, and he is now coming to seek some wealth for a noble cause, so therefore it was his (Kuber's) moral duty to help him by opening the strings of his own purse instead of confronting him.

Kuber was fully aware that Raghu would not keep anything for himself, and it would be a scandal and a most disgraceful thing for Kuber not to cooperate with such a noble, generous, gracious and magnanimous king, and instead opt to fight with him to preserve his heavenly treasure. Kuber also knew that besides the bad name, disgrace and ignominy that he would get if he decides to challenge Raghu, it was a certainty that Raghu would win the battle. Then, what would happen?

So, Kuber decided to play it safe and wise by forestalling huge embarrassment and humiliation that he would surely get upon him being defeated at the hands of king Raghu, and the easiest way out was to give the king much more than he demanded beforehand, so that the ugly situation of a standoff does not happen at all.

This is why gold pieces rained on the royal treasury during the intervening night.

This episode has a lesson for us--that if our aim is selfless, pure and holy, then even the gods would find it difficult not to cooperate, even without much pampering, worshipping and offerings or pleadings to which the gods are accustomed before extending any helping hand.]

Verse no. 30:

स भूपतिर्भासुरहेमराशिं लब्धं कुबेरादभियास्यमानात्
दिदेश कौत्साय समस्तमेव पादं सुमेरोरिव वज्रभिन्नम्॥ ५-३०

sa bhūpatirbhāsurahemarāśim labdham kuberādabhiyāsyamānāt
dideśa kautsāya samastameva pādāṁ sumeroriva vajrabhinnaṁ || 5-30

5-30. The huge heap of glittering gold that was made available to king Raghu by Kuber just as the king was about to launch his military campaign to win the treasurer of heaven, the noble and selfless king Raghu handed over the entire wealth to the scholarly sage, Kautsamuni, saying that the whole thing belongs to the sage for disposal as he deems fit.

This heap of gold resembled a part of Mt. Sumeru (mountain of gold) that had been chopped-off by the Vajra (thunderbolt).

[Note--Remarkable indeed. A lot is left here for the reader to imagine and investigate. King Raghu was not launching any campaign to win Indra, the king of heaven, who has the Vajra as his weapon. The campaign was to target Kuber, the treasurer. So what does this reference to Vajra imply? It obviously means that as soon as Kuber learnt that king Raghu would arrive in the morning, he rushed to his own king, Indra, the lord of heaven, and told him everything. So, Indra used his powerful weapon called Vajra to slice-off a fraction of the huge mountain of gold in the heaven, and told Kuber to give it to Raghu and make peace with him.

After all, Kuber was not the owner, but a mere 'keeper of the heaven's treasury', a treasurer. And so before giving away anything it was his duty to seek permission from his king, in this case Indra. When Mt. Sumeru was hit by Vajra, a rock of it was crushed into small pebbles resembling gold pieces, which then they showered on Raghu's treasury.]

Verse no. 31:

जनस्य साकेतनिवासिनस्तौ द्वावप्यभूतानभिनन्द्यसत्त्वौ
गुरुप्रदेयाधिकनिःस्पृहोऽर्थी नृपोऽर्थिकामादधिकप्रदश्च॥ ५-३१

janasya sāketanivāsinastau dvāvapyabhūtānabhinandyaśattvau
gurupradeyādhikaniḥspṛho'rthī nrpo'rthikāmādadhikapradāśca || 5-31

5-31. At that time, all the citizens of Ayodhya who witnessed this astonishing event, were left spell-bound and full of admiration for both the seeker (sage Kautsamuni) as well as the donor (king Raghu).

Here they were--while on the one hand, the seeker did not want to take even a single piece of gold more than what was required to give to his teacher, and on the other hand the donor insisted that the entire wealth was to be given to the young scholar.

[Note--A shining example of good principles, ethics and righteousness being observed in practice. Kautsamuni, the seeker or the donee, needed these gold coins to pay his debt to his teacher, and it would be wrong on his part to take anything extra. King Raghu, the donor, felt that this entire wealth belonged to the scholar as Kuber had given the gold for him, and it would be wrong to keep even a fraction of it with himself.]

Verse no. 32:

**अथोष्ट्रवामीशतवाहितार्थं प्रजेश्वरं प्रीतमना महर्षिः।
स्पृशन्करेणानतपूर्वकायं संप्रस्थितो वाचमुवाच कौत्सः॥ ५-३२**

athoṣṭravāmīśatavāhitārthaṁ prajeśvaraṁ prītamanā maharṣiḥ
spṛśankareṇānatapūrvakāyaṁ saṁprasthito vācamuvāca kautsaḥ || 5-32

5-32. The young sage Kautsamuni was extremely pleased with his donor and benefactor king Raghu who ordered all the wealth to be loaded on hundreds of camels and donkeys and transported to the destination as commanded by the sage (i.e. to the hermitage of sage Vartantu, his guru).

The young sage was so impressed by king Raghu's generosity and benevolent nature that at the time of his departure for his guru's hermitage, he placed his palms on the king's head to bless him, and said as follows--

Verse no. 33:

**किमत्र चित्रं यदि कामसूर्भूर्वृत्ते स्थितस्याधिपतेः प्रजानाम्।
अचिन्तनीयस्तु तव प्रभावो मनीषितं द्यौरपि येन दुग्धा॥ ५-३३**

kimatra citraṁ yadi kāmasūrbhūrvṛtte sthitasyaādhipateḥ prajānām
acintanīyastu tava prabhāvo manīṣitaṁ dyaurapi yena dugdhā || 5-33

5-33. Sage Kautsamuni said to king Raghu: "Oh king! You are always diligent in following a righteous, noble and selfless path while attending to the affairs of your kingdom. It is therefore not strange that mother Earth takes special care of you and your needs so that all your wishes are fulfilled (because she knows that whatever she gives you, you are going to use every single thing for the good of your subjects in a selfless and transparent manner). Your glory, fame and influence are beyond imagination, and they are not restricted to the limits of the earth alone, but extend even to the heaven.

[Note--Kautsamuni was referring to Kuber showering gold pieces from the heaven as soon as he realised that king Raghu was coming to him to exact a tribute of 14 crore gold

pieces so that the seeker at his door could get his wish fulfilled. Kuber didn't need any persuasion or discussions on the matter, but the mere name of Raghu was enough for him. So famous was the king that his name inspired trust and confidence in the mind of the opposite party, and his name and reputation were an insurance in themselves that what was asked would be entirely used for a noble and charitable cause, and not diverted for some personal use by the king himself.

Like Kuber, mother Earth also provided king Raghu a bountiful of her treasures such as good harvests, abundance of gems, water resources, fertile soil, excellent land for habitation, verdant forests and green meadows, rivers and oceans that observed their boundaries, and other such gifts of Nature. In Raghu's kingdom there was no dearth of anything.]

Verse no. 34:

आशास्यमन्यत्पुनरुक्तभूतं श्रेयांसि सर्वाण्यधिजग्मुषस्ते
पुत्रं लभस्वात्मगुणानुरूपं भवन्तमीड्यं भवतः पितेव॥ ५-३४

āśāsyamanyatpunaruktabhūtaṁ śreyāṁsi sarvāṇyadhijagmuṣaste
putraṁ labhasvātmaguṇānurūpaṁ bhavantamīdyam bhavataḥ piteva || 5-34

5-34. Since you are already so blessed and fortunate that it is useless to grant you any worldly boon (because you lack in nothing that I can give you, but nevertheless I wish to grant you something that you really need, a boon that you would remember for life, and which would help to keep aloft the banner of your honourable name for generations to come).

So, to fulfil my own wish and to express my gratitude to you, I grant you a boon that like you had acquired the stellar virtues, characters and qualities of your esteemed late father (king Dilip), you too would be blessed with a son who would possess all the goodness you have, and even excel in them.

{I confer upon you a blessing that your offspring would fly the banner of your fame, majesty and honourable name high, and would carry forward your noble reputation to the next generation and beyond. I think you need this boon, as the only thing I noticed you lack is a son; everything else you already have. If I grant you anything else, it would be a repetition of what you already have, so I wish to grant you something that you actually need, a worthy son in your image!}"

Verse no. 35:

इत्थं प्रयुज्याशिषमग्रजन्मा राज्ञे प्रतीयाय गुरोः सकाशम्
राजापि लेभे सुतमाशु तस्मादालोकमर्कादिव जीवलोकः॥ ५-३५

itthaṁ prayujyāśiṣamagrajanmā rājñe pratiyāya guroḥ sakāśam
rājāpi lebhe sutamāśu tasmādāloka markādīva jīvalokaḥ || 5-35

5-35. After conferring this blessing on king Raghu, the young sage went back to his teacher, sage Vartantu (to pay the latter his fees).

In due course of time, king Raghu was blessed with a son as a result of the blessings granted to him by sage Kautsamuni, just like human beings get the benefit of illumination from the sun.

[Note--The Sun-God shows his graciousness on the human race by appearing in the sky in the physical form of the sun. It is this sun that not only provides light and heat to the world but helps sustain life itself, because without the sun the inhabitants of the earth, both plants and animals, would freeze to death.

The Supreme Being sends the sun to grant light and heat to the world, and so likewise the Lord had sent sage Kautsamuni to king Raghu so that the latter could be blessed with a much-desired offspring. In this verse, sage Kautsamuni is likened to the sun, and the light of the sun to the blessing he granted to king Raghu that he would have a son. Just like the case of the sunlight being a reward the sun grants to humans, the son of king Raghu was like a reward that he got by fulfilling the wishes of the scholarly sage Kautsamuni.]

Verse no. 36:

ब्राह्मे मुहूर्ते किल तस्य देवी कुमारकल्पं सुषुवे कुमारम्।

अतः पिता ब्रह्मण एव नाम्ना तमात्मजन्मानमजं चकार॥ ५-३६

brāhme muhūrte kila tasya devī kumārakalpaṁ suṣuve kumāram
ataḥ pitā brahmaṇa eva nāmnā tamātmajanmānamajaṁ cakāra || 5-36

5-36. The queen delivered a son during an auspicious hour of the day, called the 'Brahma Muhurta'. The son was almost equal to Lord Shiva's son Kartikeya (who later on became a great warrior). The king named his son 'Aja' after Lord Brahma, the creator, after whom the auspicious period of the day is named when his son was born.

[Note--The 'Brahma Muhurta' refers to the hours before sunrise. It is so-called because it is the time when a person is supposed to wake up from sleep and start a new day, which symbolically implies that a person starts a new life after leaving behind the previous life at the time of his death, because when a person sleeps his physically body lies almost like a dead person, just like the Creator Brahma began this creation afresh at the end of its previous existence.

The Brahma Muhurta is typically of 1 hour and 36 minutes (total of 96 minutes) before sunrise. It is also called as the 'creator's hour', and generally falls between 3.30 am - to 5.30 am. It is regarded as the best and ideal time for waking up from sleep, and doing meditation, study and spiritual practices, because the body and mind are fresh after sleep, there is mental peace and clarity, the atmosphere is clean and calm, fresh air is aplenty, and the person is therefore able to concentrate properly in his studies, doing meditation and focusing on spiritual pursuits.

Just like the Creator Brahma is regarded as the senior-most God in the heaven, so by naming his son 'Aja', which is another name of Brahma, the king hoped his son would be the greatest of all the rulers in the world, and as respected as Brahma is in heaven. Besides this, Brahma created the Vedas, the repository of all traditional knowledge, which implies that he himself is exceptionally wise and learned, so the king hoped that his son Aja would also become exceptionally learned and skilled in all the spheres of learning.]

Verse no. 37:

रूपं तदोजस्वि तदेव वीर्यं तदेव नैसर्गिकमुन्नतत्वम्
न कारणात्स्वादिबिभेदे कुमारः प्रवर्तितो दीप इव प्रदीपात्॥ ५-३७

rūpaṁ tadojasvi tadeva vīryaṁ tadeva naisargikamunnatatvam
na kāraṇātsvādbibhede kumāraḥ pravartito dīpa iva pradīpāt || 5-37

5-37. Prince Aja acquired all the characteristics of his father, king Raghu. Thus, Aja was as radiant and majestic as Raghu, had the same valour, mettle, powers and strength as his father, his physical body resembled that of his father in all the criteria or measures of personality, such as a broad chest and forehead, high head, muscular build, tall height, glowing complexion, a majestic presence, dignity, confidence, et al.

Just like the case of a new lamp that is lit from another lighted lamp being absolutely similar to the latter, and there being no difference between the two when they are placed side-by-side, so was also the case of Aja and his father Raghu, as it was impossible to distinguish between the two.

{To wit, prince Aja was a perfect mirror image of his father, king Raghu. This similarity with his father Raghu began from the time Aja was a child, and extended to the time when the prince grew up to become an adult. This unique similarity was not only physical, but it covered Aja's character, behaviour, thinking and attitude. Like his father, Aja was a follower of Dharma, charitable, magnanimous, benevolent, kind, gracious, learned, skilled, a warrior par-excellence, majestic and glorious.}

Verse no. 38:

उत्पातविद्यं विधिवद्गुरुभ्यस्तं यौवनोद्धेदविशेषकान्तम्
श्रीः साभिलाषापि गुरोरनुज्ञां धीरेव कन्या पितुराचकाङ्क्ष॥ ५-३८

utpātavidyaṁ vidhivadgurubhyastaṁ yauvanodbhedaviśeṣakāntam
śrīḥ sābhilāṣāpi guroranujñāṁ dhīreva kanyā piturācakāṅkṣa || 5-38

5-38. Prince Aja completed his formal education (under the aegis and guidance of sage Vashistha), and in due course attained adulthood. He was very handsome and had a most charming personality, and the deity of the kingdom, called 'rajya-laxmi', was eager to woo and embrace him but was waiting for the permission of his father, king Raghu, just

like a maiden who seeks the hand of an eligible bachelor waits for the consent of her parents to go ahead.

[Note--What is meant here is that the time for official anointment of Aja as the crown prince had come, and the deity representing all the powers and privileges that comes with the kingdom's throne was very eager to see Aja sitting on the throne with the crown on his head. Just like a beautiful maiden narrows down on a suitable partner for her and yearns to have his hand in hers to symbolise their union, so did the deity of Ayodhya who wanted to establish a close relationship with the handsome and able prince Aja so that she can derive pleasure in serving him, a privilege which she now yearned all the more given the prince's immaculate character and excellent qualities.]

Verse no. 39:

अथेश्वरेण क्रथकैशिकानां स्वयंवरार्थं स्वसुरिन्दुमत्याः।

आप्तः कुमारानयनोत्सुकेन भोजेन दूतो रघवे विसृष्टः॥ ५-३९

atheśvareṇa krathakaiśikānāṃ svayaṃvarārthaṃ svasurindumatyāḥ
āptaḥ kumārānayanotsukena bhojena dūto raghave visr̥ṣṭaḥ || 5-39

5-39. In the meanwhile, a king named Bhoj of the kingdom of Vidharva, was organising a marriage ceremony known as 'swyambar' for his sister named Indumati. He wanted to invite prince Aja to this ceremony, so he sent his trusted messenger to king Raghu with an invitation.

[Note--The 'Swyambar' is a kind of marriage ceremony held for a girl where all eligible candidates are invited by the girl's family to participate as a potential bridegroom. The word 'swyambar' has two parts--'swyam' means self, and 'bar' meaning to wed. Under this system, either the parents of the would-be bride set a set of condition, and whosoever fulfils them becomes to marry the girl, as was the case of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita where Sita's father, king Janak, had declared that anyone who could lift an old bow of Lord Shiva that was kept with him, would become eligible to marry her. Since all other candidates failed and Lord Ram succeeded in not only lifting but even breaking the ancient bow, he was automatically selected to marry Sita.

The other option was that the girl herself walks around the arena where all the candidates are seated. She made two rounds, first to see the candidates, and in the second round put a garland, which she carried in her hands, around the person of her choice. An example of this is the marriage of Lord Vishnu and Laxmi. This episode is narrated in the context of Samudra Manthan, or the churning of the celestial ocean.

King Bhoj invited all the princes of suitable age to participate as competitors for in the Swyambar ceremony to marry his sister Indumati, and it was but natural that he would also invite prince Aja.]

Verse no. 40:

तम् श्लाघ्यसंबन्धमसौ विचिन्त्य दारक्रियायोग्यदशश्च पुत्रम्।
प्रस्थापयामास ससैन्यमेनमृद्धां विदर्भाधिपराजधानीम्॥ ५-४०

taṁ ślāghyasambandhamasau vicintya dārakriyāyogyadaśaśca putram
prasthāpayāmāsa sasainyamenamṛddhāṁ vidarbhādhīparājadhānīm || 5-40

5-40. King Raghu thought over the matter and concluded that it would an honour to establish a relationship with another great king, Bhoj of Vidharva. Besides it, his son, prince Aja, too had reached a marriageable age, and it would be in fitness of things if this alliance could be realised.

With these considerations in mind, king Raghu gave his nod and sent prince Aja to attend the marriage ceremony as requested by king Bhoj of Vidharva. A huge contingent of the army of Raghu, large enough to suit the prince's stature, was dispatched with the young prince to accompany him to the host's kingdom.

[Note--Vidharva was a great kingdom in ancient India in the eastern Deccan. Its capital was Kundinapuri, identified with modern city of Kundapur. It played an important place in ancient trade and commerce, and was a prosperous kingdom of the time. In the modern context, this kingdom corresponded to the present-day state of eastern Maharashtra, south of the Vindhya range of mountains. During the famous War of Kurushetra, where Lord Krishna had played a crucial role, it remained neutral.]

Verse no. 41:

तस्योपकार्यारचितोपचारा वन्येतरा जानपदोपदाभिः।
मार्गे निवासा मनुजेन्द्रसूनोर्बभूवुरुद्यानविहारकल्पाः॥ ५-४१

tasyopakāryāracitopacārā vanyetarā jānapadopadābhiḥ
mārgē nivāsā manujendrasūnorbabhūvurudyānavihārakalpāḥ || 5-41

5-41. At all the places en-route where Aja and his entourage halted for rest, all possible arrangements for comfortable stay were fully provided for before hand. These halting stations were so well equipped that they resembled royal gardens in the midst of the surrounding forests and rustic countryside, complete with their pavilions, fountains, recreational zones and greenery. The accommodation tents at these camps had cushions, soft comfortable beds and seating arrangements. The food and refreshments that were made available in these camps were so varied, refined and sumptuous that they did not seem to have been procured locally from the villages and forests on the route. {It implies that they were prepared in the royal kitchens of either Ayodhya or Vidharva as the case may have been, and transported there before the arrival of the prince.}

[Note--Though it is customary that the host, in this case king Bhoj of Vidharava, would make all arrangements for the invitees, and in this case the invitee was not an ordinary prince but an heir to another mighty kingdom of Ayodhya whom Bhoj had personally

invited to participate in the marriage ceremony of his sister, it is natural to assume that all arrangements, from lodging and food to logistics, were made by king Bhoj.

But at the same time, Aja's father, king Raghu, too made it sure that his son does not face any bit of inconvenience. So he ensured that all arrangements were made to the prince's liking and taste. Obviously, an outsider like king Bhoj would not be aware of the prince's personal preferences like his father would do. Hence, no matter how wonderful the arrangements made by king Bhoj had been, king Raghu did not want to take chances and made parallel arrangements himself.

It must be remembered that both Ayodhya and Vidharva were huge kingdoms with extensive lands under their domain. So it also implies that king Raghu made all arrangements while the party of prince Aja was within the limits of his own kingdom, and as soon as the party crossed over to the kingdom of Vidharva, all the arrangements after that were made by king Bhoj.]

Verse no. 42:

स नर्मदारोधसि सीकरार्द्रैर्मरुद्भिरानर्तितनक्तमाले
निवेशयामास विलङ्घिताध्वा क्लान्तं रजोधूसरकेतु सैन्यम्॥ ५-४२

sa narmadārodhasi sīkarārdrairmarudbhirānartitanaktamāle
niveśayāmāsa vilāṅghitādhvā klāntaṁ rajodhūsaraketu sainyam || 5-42

5-42. Near the end of his journey long, prince Aja arrived at the banks of river Narmada¹. His army was tired and its banners etc. were dirty with dust due to the long march. Soft, pleasant and moisture-laden breeze wafted in towards the land from the river, spraying moisture on the banks as well as the surrounding Karanja trees² (i.e. the Indian Beech; Karanja Pongamia; Milletia Pinnata) that swayed with the breeze, appearing to be dancing in slow motion.

So prince Aja decided to halt there, and therefore he ordered his army to pitch camp on the banks of river Narmada to relax and take some rest.

[Note—¹The Narmada river is also known as the lifeline of the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujrat in modern India. It is the country's longest westward flowing river, spanning roughly 1312 km. It originates at Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh, and flows westwards through Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra and Gujrat, and empties into the Arabian Sea on the west coast. It acts as a natural boundary between northern and southern India.

²The Karanja tree is a medium sized evergreen, deciduous tree. It is usually 8 metre high, but can grow upto 15-25 metres in height. The trunk is either straight or crooked, about 50 cm. in diameter, covered with grey-brown bark, is smooth or can be vertically fissured.]

Verse no. 43:

अथोपरिष्ठाद्भ्रमरैर्भ्रमद्भिः प्राक्सूचितान्तःसलिलप्रवेशः।

निर्धौतदानामलगण्डभित्तिर्वन्यः सरित्तो गज उन्ममज्ज ॥ ५-४३

athopariṣṭādbhramarairbhramadbhiḥ prāksūcitāntaḥsalilapraveśaḥ
nirdhautadānāmalagaṇḍabhittirvanyaḥ saritto gaja unmamajja || 5-43

5-43. After the army had rested for a while, they observed that a wild elephant had emerged from the waters of river Narmada. A huge swarm of bees was hovering over the spot from where the elephant emerged, implying that they had crowded over the head of the animal because they had been lured by the powerful scent of the ichor that was effusing from the temple of this mature male elephant, and annoyed by their constant buzzing and stinging, the poor elephant had plunged into the river to clean his head and ward-off the nuisance of the bees. When the elephant emerged from the water, his head was clean as all stains of the ichor and blood from the scars of bee-bite were washed away.

[Note--As has been noted earlier too, the ichor is a scented, sticky and viscous fluid that effuses from glands beneath the skin of the temple of a mature male elephant. As the bees have a habit to get attracted to such fluids, they came in droves to buzz around the poor animal's head, making him mad with annoyance. Seeing no other way to shoo away this nuisance, the elephant jumped into the water and dived in.]

Verse no. 44:

निःशेषविक्षालितधातुनापि वप्रक्रियामृक्षवतस्तटेषु।

नीलोर्ध्वरेखाशबलेन शंसन्दन्तद्वयेनाश्मविकुण्ठितेन ॥ ५-४४

niḥśeṣavikṣālitadhātunāpi vaprakriyāmṛkṣavatastāṭeṣu
nīlordhvarekhāśabalena śamsandantadvayenāśmavikuṇṭhiteṇa || 5-44

5-44. All dirt and powered dust of rock and minerals that had been sticking to that elephant's body because of his earlier dashing and rubbing himself against rocks of mountainsides, had been washed clean when he dipped in the waters of river Narmada. Yet, marks of that angry sport in which the animal had engaged were still evident in the form of his broken tusk with which he had tried to dislodge huge rocks, as well as deep scratches and bloody gashes that were formed all over his head and body because of his vigorous brushing and maddened rampaging against the sides of craggy mountains and sharp rocks.

[Note--The idea here is to paint the sort of wild and reckless animal that elephant was. He was a giant, a mammoth of the wilds. This portrayal is significant in the context of what we are about to read soon in the verses that follow, which would show how courageous, brave, bold, strong and powerful prince Aja was.]

Verse no. 45:

संहारविक्षेपलघुक्रियेण हस्तेन तीराभिमुखः सशब्दम्
बभौ स भिन्दन्बृहतस्तरंगान्वार्यर्गलाभङ्ग इव प्रवृत्तः॥ ५-४५

samhāravikṣepalaghukriyeṇa hastena tīrābhimukhaḥ saśabdham
babhau sa bhindanbr̥hatastaraṅgānvāryargalābhaṅga iva pravṛttaḥ || 5-45

5-45. The wild elephant emerged from the water, and trumpeting angrily, splashing the water violently with his tusk, and slicing through the current of the river so as to divide it into two halves, he dashed madly towards the bank of the river on the side where prince Aja and his army had pitched camp.

With the haste and rush which he showed at the time, it appeared that the elephant was determined to break free from its imaginary shackles, and flee from the site as quickly as possible to avoid another attack by the bees.

Verse no. 46:

शैलोपमः शैवलमञ्जरीणां जालानि कर्षन्नुरसा स पश्चात्
पूर्वं तदुत्पीडितवारिराशिः सरित्प्रवाहस्तटमुत्ससर्प॥ ५-४६

śailopamaḥ śaivalamañjarīṇāṃ jālāni karṣannurasā sa paścāt
pūrvam tadutpīḍitavārīrāśiḥ saritpravāhastatamutsasarpa || 5-46

5-46. The wild elephant rushed with such a mighty force towards the bank of the river that the water was churned, the current was cleaved into two, and huge waves were created on the surface of the river as the water was violently pushed towards the bank where prince Aja and his army had pitched camp. This sudden inland rush of churning water inundated the area around the camp of Aja, and covered it with dirty water and stirred up mud, making the site boggy, slippery and slushy.

Soon behind this rush of water came the maddened elephant himself. During his mad dash towards the bank, the elephant had uprooted creepers and gathered moss that now clung to his body, giving him a fearful and hideous look.

[Note--For all practical purposes, this elephant looked like a fearful giant mammoth of some ancient era long forgotten, and the like of which no one in the army of prince Aja had ever seen before. Obviously, they were all terrified out of their wits.]

Verse no. 47:

तस्यैकनागस्य कपोलभित्त्योर्जलावगाहक्षणमेकशान्ता।
वन्येतरानेकपदर्शनेन पुनर्दिदीपे मददुर्दिनश्रीः॥ ५-४७

tasyaikanāgasya kapolabhittyorjalāvagāhakṣaṇamekaśāntā |
vanyetarānekapadarśanena punardidīpe madadurdinaśrīḥ || 5-47

5-47. The viscous ichor that had been flowing from the glands around the elephant's temples and covered both the sides of his head till now, had been washed away when he dipped in the water of river Narmada. But when he saw the elephants of Aja's army, the elephant got so excited once again that the ichor once again started dripping from his temples.

[Note--The ichor oozes out of the glands under the skin of the elephant's temples when the animal is excited. When that mammoth saw the elephants of the prince's army, it got excited once again, resulting in the resumption of the flow of ichor.]

Verse no. 48:

सप्तच्छदक्षीरकटुप्रवाहमसह्यमाघ्राय मदं तदीयम्।
विलङ्घिताधोरणतीव्रयत्नाः सेनागजेन्द्रा विमुखा बभूवुः ॥ ५-४८

saptacchadakṣīrakatuṣṭupravāhamasahyamāghrāya madam tadīyam |
vilāṅghitādhoraṇatīvrayatnāḥ senāgajendrā vimukhā babhūvuḥ || 5-48

5-48. The strong odour emanating from the body as well as the ichor of the furious wild elephant who was in a rut, and who had presently emerged from the water to make a dash for the river's bank where Aja and his army had pitched camp, was as overpowering for the senses as is the smell of the milk (sap) oozing out of the Chhitwan plant¹, so much so that even the best trained elephants of Aja's army became so agitated that they broke free from the restraining shackles put on them by their tamers, and ran away helter-skelter.

[Note--¹The Chhitwan plant is called the Devil's Tree, Blackboard Tree, Milkwood Pine or Scholar Tree in English, and the Saptaparni (seven-leaved) tree in Sanskrit. Its botanical name is *Alstonia scholaris*. It is an evergreen tropical tree in the family Apocynaceae. It is native to Indian sub-continent, Southeast Asia and Australasia. It has fragrant, green-white flowers that bloom in October. It is a tall tree that can grow upto 40 meters in height, has a straight trunk, and branches that grow in whorls--i.e. the branches grow from the same part of the trunk and encircle it. This pattern is also shown by its flowers where petals and sepals arrange themselves concentrically around the receptacle. The leaves are also arranged in clusters of seven, hence the name 'Saptarani'--seven leaves.

It derives its name 'Milkwood Pine' because of the strong, intoxicating smell its sap gives. It is called 'Sholar Tree' because its wood is used to make slates or blackboards that are used by students and schools respectively.

All parts of this tree are toxic, and its sap is very harmful for the skin. The pollen can cause severe allergies. Hence, it is usually repulsive.

These characteristics of the tree, such as its allergy-creating pollen and the repulsive smell of its sap are being cited here to emphasise why the elephants of Aja's

army ran away when they smelled the ichor and the body odour of the wild elephant. The wild elephant was stinking badly, and its mere presence was repulsive for the elephants of Aja's army as they seemed to be irritated by his sight.]

Verse no. 49:

स च्छिन्नबन्धद्रुतयुग्यशून्यं भग्नक्षपर्यस्तरथं क्षणेन।
रामापरित्राणविहस्तयोधं सेननिवेशं तुमुलं चकार॥ ५-४९

sa cchinnabandhadrutayugyaśūnyaṁ bhagnakṣaparyastarathaṁ kṣaṇena
rāmāparitrāṇavihastayodhaṁ senaniveśaṁ tumulaṁ cakāra || 5-49

5-49. No sooner had the wild elephant appeared near the camp of Aja's army, than all hell broke loose, and there was a great turmoil in the rank and file of the army. Horses and elephants broke free from their restraining ropes and shackles and ran away, tearing apart tents and overturning any other thing that came in their way so much so that the chariots toppled over and their axles broke. The soldiers got bogged down by the upheaval, and with no scope of stopping the animals they focused their attention rather in protecting the terrified ladies present in the camp.

[Note--It must be remembered that this was a royal entourage heading to attend a marriage ceremony in which prince Aja was a guest; it was not an army going out on a military campaign. That is why ladies too were present in this company. These ladies belonged to senior families of the kingdom, such as ministers, courtiers, advisors, priests, commanders of the army, different branches of the administrative machinery, leaders of business and trade, noble men, and ladies of the royal household.

It is very easy to visualise the turmoil that unfolded in the camp, and these women must have become perplexed; they shrieked and cried in terror, and pleaded for protection. So the attention of the majority of the soldiers was now diverted to protecting these helpless ladies.]

Verse no. 50:

तमापतन्तं नृपतेरवध्यो वन्यः करीति श्रुतवान्कुमारः।
निर्वर्तयिष्यन्विशिखेन कुम्भे जघान नात्यायतकृष्टशार्ङ्गः॥ ५-५०

tamāpatantaṁ nṛpateravadhyo vanyaḥ karīti śrutavāṅkumāraḥ
nirvartayiṣyanviśikhena kumbhe jaghāna nātyāyatakrṣṭaśāṅgaḥ || 5-50

5-50. 'A noble king ought not to kill a wild and mad elephant as it is against established norms to do so'--thinking thus, prince Aja decided not to kill the rogue elephant but instead injure him so that he is stopped from charging forward and is pushed back. Therefore, Aja lifted his bow and pulled its string back a little to shoot a sharp arrow

straight at the head of the rogue elephant with just enough force as to stop it and make it run away.

[Note--A noble king would only kill an elephant if it is charging at him on the command of the king's enemy, and is determined to kill the king if something is not done quick. But in this case, there was no enemy, and the elephant seems to be mad, i.e. out of his senses. To kill a mad animal who would otherwise mean no harm had it been in its senses, is not the right and proper thing to do for a warrior. So Aja decided to deflect the elephant and make it run away in another direction.]

Verse no. 51:

स विद्धमात्रः किल नागरूपमुत्सृज्य तद्विस्मितसैन्यदृष्टः।
स्फुरत्प्रभामण्डलमध्यवर्ति कान्तं वपुर्व्योमचरः प्रपेदे॥ ५-५१

sa viddhamātraḥ kila nāgarūpamutsrjya tadvismitasainyadrṣṭaḥ
sphuratprabhāmaṇḍalamadhyavartī kāntaṁ vapurvvyomacaraḥ prapede || 5-51

5-51. No sooner had the arrow of prince Aja struck the elephant, than the latter shed its elephant-like physical body and transformed into a divine being with a glowing halo around him even while the soldiers of the prince watched this miraculous spectacle in utter astonishment.

Verse no. 52:

अथ प्रभावोपनतैः कुमारं कल्पद्रुमोत्थैरवकीर्य पुष्पैः।
उवाच वाग्मी दशनप्रभाभिः संवर्धितोरःस्थलतारहारः॥ ५-५२

atha prabhāvopanatāiḥ kumāraṁ kalpadrumotthairavakīrya puṣpaiḥ
uvāca vāgmī daśanaprabhābhiḥ saṁvardhitorasṭhalatārahāraḥ || 5-52

5-52. That divine being invoked the Kalpa Tree (the evergreen tree of heaven) by his supernatural powers, and showered its flowers on prince Aja. The necklace of pure white pearls shined on his chest with a soft radiance, while his white teeth gleamed in the light. Then, this celestial being spoke to prince Aja as follows--

Verse no. 53:

मतङ्गशापादवलेपमूलादवाप्तवानस्मि मतङ्गजत्वम्।
अवेहि गन्धर्वपतेस्तनूजं प्रियंवदं मां प्रियदर्शनस्य॥ ५-५३

mataṅgaśāpādavalepamūlādavāptavānasmi mataṅgajatvam
avehi gandharvapatestanūjaṁ priyaṁvadaṁ māṁ priyadarśanasya || 5-53

5-53. The divine being said to Aja: "It was due to the consequence of my own folly of being arrogant that I was transformed into an elephant by the curse of the revered sage Matang. Actually, I am the son of the king of Gandharvas (demi-gods or heavenly beings who are masters in the art and craft of theatre, illusions, music and dance) named Priyadarshan. My name is Priyamvad.

Verse no. 54:

**स चानुनीतः प्रणतेन पश्चान्मया महर्षिर्मृदुतामगच्छत्
उष्णत्वमग्न्यातपसंप्रयोगाच्छैत्यं हि यत्सा प्रकृतिर्जलस्य॥ ५-५४**

sa cānūnītaḥ praṇatena paścānmayā maharṣirmṛdutaṁmagacchat
uṣṇatvamagnyātapasaṁprayogācchaityaṁ hi yatsā prakṛtirjalasya || 5-54

5-54. But when I begged for forgiveness by prostrating before him, the sage calmed down, just like the case of water which becomes hot and scalding when heated, but it soon becomes cold and soothing because its inherent and basic nature is to heal and cool, and not burn or scald.

[Note--In this analogy, sage Matang is compared to water. The water's intrinsic quality is to cool and sooth whatever it touches. But when agitated by external heat, it begins to boil and become so hot that it would instantly burn and scald the skin by its mere touch, just as the fire itself would. So was the case with sage Matang: primarily he was a calm and quiet sage, but when someone irritated him beyond a certain tolerable limit, the sage lost his cool and vented his anger by cursing the offender, like an erupting volcano pouring out burning lava.

But then, just as the water cools down and loses its scalding quality once the fire is removed, so was the case with sage Matang. After the initial blast of anger, when the offender prayed for forgiveness, the sage blessed him, and even though the curse could not be taken back, the sage would bless the offender with certain conditions, which when fulfilled in some later day, the curse would then cease to be effective.]

Verse no. 55:

**इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवो यदा ते भेत्स्यत्यजः कुम्भमयोमुखेन
संयोक्ष्यसे स्वेन वपुर्महिम्ना तदेत्यवोचत्स तपोनिधिर्माम्॥ ५-५५**

ikṣvākuvaṁśaprabhavo yadā te bhetsyatyajaḥ kumbhamayomukhena
saṁyokṣyase svena vapurmahimnā tadetyavocatsa taponidhirmām || 5-55

5-55. Pleased by my humble prayers requesting the sage to forgive me, sage Matang told me: 'When a prince named Aja of the glorious Ikṣvaku dynasty would hit your head with an arrow having an iron tip, then you would be freed from the effects of this curse, and at that time you would get back your original form of a Gandharva prince.'

Verse no. 56:

संमोचितः सत्त्ववता त्वयाहं शापाच्चिरप्रार्थितदर्शनेन
प्रतिप्रियं चेद्भवतो न कुर्या वृथा हि मे स्यात्स्वपदोपलब्धिः॥ ५-५६

sāmmocitaḥ sattvavatā tvayāhaṁ śāpācciraprārthitadarśanena
pratipriyaṁ cedbhavato na kuryāṁ vṛthā hi me syātsvapadopalabdhīḥ || 5-56

5-56. I had become an elephant because of the sage's curse, and had been awaiting for your auspicious arrival since a very long time so that I can find deliverance from that curse. Oh gracious and kind prince, now that I am freed from the curse I feel very obliged and grateful to you, and thank you very much for my freedom.

Now therefore, if I do not give you something in return as a mark of my feeling of gratitude to you, then it would be highly unrighteous and ungrateful on my part, and my regaining my original form would be worthless if I do not honour my benefactor.

Verse no. 57:

संमोहनं नाम सखे ममास्त्रं प्रयोगसंहारविभक्तमन्त्रम्
गान्धर्वमादत्स्व यतः प्रयोक्तुर्न चारिहिंसा विजयश्च हस्ते॥ ५-५७

sāmmohanam nāma sakhe mamāstraṁ prayogasamhāravibhaktamantram
gāndharvamādatsva yataḥ prayokturna cārihimsā vijayaśca haste || 5-57

5-57. Oh my friend Aja! Now therefore, please accept this weapon known as 'Gandharva's weapon'. It is called a 'sammohan astra'¹, and it is a very unique missile inasmuch as it can use the power of magic and hypnotism to create a sense of delusion and illusion for the opponent who instantly can be brought under the influence and control of the user of this mystical weapon. It needs two independent mantras to make it work--one to shoot it at the opponent, and the other to call it back (i.e. to numb the opponent and make him surrender without resistance).

Since this weapon uses hypnotism and magic to bring the adversary under control, instead of killing or gravely injuring the latter, it is a very safe weapon for both the user as well as the victim. The user's purpose of vanquishing the adversary and bring the latter under his control is served very easily, without the attendant bitterness, bloodshed and guilt. This makes the adversary feel very thankful to the user for sparing his life.

[Note--¹The Sammohan Astra is a weapon which is like a magical missile. When it is used on someone, it casts a magical spell on the target so that the person on whom it is used comes under the influence of the person who owns the Sammohan Astra. This magical missile is a standard weapon used by Gandharvas in heaven who use it to cast a spell on their targets and bring them under their influence.

This missile was more like a modified stun-gun that does not kill the opposite party, but simply makes him immobile and faint so that he can be easily disarmed and brought under control, avoiding the need for the actual gun-fight using live bullets that result in blood and mayhem.]

Verse no. 58:

अलं ह्रिया मां प्रति यन्मुहूर्तं दयापरोऽभूः प्रहरन्नपि त्वम्
तस्मादुपच्छन्दयति प्रयोज्यं मयि त्वया न प्रतिषेधरौक्ष्यम्॥ ५-५८

alam hriyā māṁ prati yanmuhūrtaṁ dayāparo'bhūḥ praharannapi tvam
tasmādupacchandayati prayojyaṁ mayi tvayā na pratiṣedharaukṣyam || 5-58

5-58. Please don't feel guilty or ashamed at all for hitting me with your arrow, because instead of harming me you have done a great service to me by delivering me from that horrible curse. You have shown kindness, grace and mercy upon me by freeing me from that horrible curse; you have done a noble and honourable deed, and not something that is ignoble or dishonourable for you. I am sincerely grateful to you.

Hence, please don't show roughness and disappoint me by refusing to accept my proposal of this sammohan astra, but be gracious by obliging me by accepting it."

Verse no. 59:

तथेत्युपस्पृश्य पयः पवित्रं सोमोद्भवायाः सरितो नृसोमः।
उदङ्मुखः सोऽस्त्रविदस्त्रमन्त्रं जग्राह तस्मान्निगृहीतशापात्॥ ५-५९

tathetyupaspr̥śya payaḥ pavitraṁ somodbhavāyāḥ sarito nṛsomaḥ
udaṁmukhaḥ so'stravidastramantraṁ jagrāha tasmānnigrhītaśāpāt || 5-59

5-59. Then Aja, whose face was as charming as the full moon, and who was very proficient with weapons, said, 'Be it so as you desire'. He then cleaned his mouth by sipping in water of river Narmada. This water was as rejuvenating and fresh as the 'soma drink' which originates in the moon¹. After this purification rite, he faced towards the north and acquired the magical weapon known as the 'sammohan astra' from the Gandharva named Priyamvad (who was the son of the Gandharva king Priyadarshan); he also learnt how to use it. This particular Gandharva was more than happy at this because prince Aja had provided liberation to him from the curse cast upon him by sage Matang.

[Note—¹The 'Soma' is a rejuvenating and cooling drink of the gods. The moon is said to be a reservoir of this drink. That is why its rays are cool and soothing as compared to that of the sun which is a reservoir of the fire element.]

Verse no. 60:

एवं तयोरध्वनि दैवयोगादासेदुषोः सख्यमचिन्त्यहेतुः।

एको ययौ चैत्ररथप्रदेशान्सौराज्यरम्यानपरो विदर्भान्॥ ५-६०

evaṁ tayoradhvani daivayogādāseduṣoḥ sakhyamacintyāhetu
eko yayau caitrarathapradeśānsaurājyaramyānaparo vidarbhān || 5-60

5-60. This most unexpected but highly fruitful and fortunate meeting between two strangers proved a boon for both, because besides establishing an eternal bond of friendship between them, both gained immensely by this fortunate encounter, one (the gandharva prince Priyamvad) gaining freedom from a horrible curse and regaining his original form and honour, and the other (prince Aja) acquiring a unique magical weapon which would enable him to win over his opponent or anyone he wishes to bring under his influence. Hence, it was a win-win situation for both.

After this fortunate encounter, both went bid farewell to each other and went their way--the gandharva prince Prayamvad headed to the garden of Kuber (treasurer of heaven) named Chaitra-rath, while prince Aja proceeded to the beautiful and well-governed kingdom of Vidharva (which was as rich and glamorous as the realm of Kuber in heaven).

Verse no. 61:

तं तस्थिवांसं नगरोपकण्ठे तदागमारूढगुरुप्रहर्षः।

प्रत्युज्जगाम क्रथकैशिकेन्द्रश्चन्द्रं प्रवृद्धोर्मिरिवोर्मिमाली॥ ५-६१

taṁ tasthivāṁsaṁ nagaropakāṇṭhe tadāgamārūḍhagurupraharṣaḥ
pratyujjagāma krathakaiśikendraścandraṁ pravṛddhormirivormimālī || 5-61

5-61. When king Bhoj of Vidharva heard of the arrival of prince Aja on the outskirts of his capital, he was exhilarated. He went forward to meet Aja with great enthusiasm just like the mighty ocean shows its pleasure when it sees the full moon in the sky by collecting all its waves and heaving up during the full moon night.

[Note--This natural phenomenon of high tide during the full moon is interpreted by poets to describe how the ocean feels very excited and happy to see the full moon rise in the sky so much so that it tries to go up as high as possible to touch the moon and welcome the guest.

This analogy is employed here to emphasise that king Bhoj was highly enthusiastic when he went out to welcome prince Aja as his special guest. Bhoj collected all his ministers to welcome Aja formally.]

Verse no. 62:

प्रवेश्य चैनं पुनरग्रयायी नीचैस्तथोपाचरदर्पितश्रीः।

मेने यथा तत्र जनः समेतो वैदर्भमागन्तुमजं गृहेशम्॥ ५-६२

praveśya cainaṁ punaragrayāyī nīcaistathopācaradarpitaśrīḥ
mene yathā tatra janaḥ sameto vaidarbhamaṅgantumajaṁ grheśam || 5-62

5-62. Showing extreme courtesy and warm hospitality to prince Aja, king Bhoj escorted him to the city (i.e. his capital) and made all arrangements for his lodging. The king placed all facilities available in his kingdom at the service of the guest and showed so much respect and showered so many privileges upon the guest prince Aja that the impression which everyone got was that Aja was the de-facto ruler of Vidharva, and Bhoj himself was a guest (instead of the other way round).

[Note--It means that a large retinue of servants and attendants were appointed to take care of Aja and his needs. The place of his lodging must have been palatial just like the royal palace of a king.]

Verse no. 63:

तस्याधिकारपुरुषैः प्रणतैः प्रदिष्टां

प्राग्द्वारवेदिविनिवेशितपूर्णकुम्भाम्।

रम्यां रघुप्रतिनिधिः स नवोपकार्या

बाल्यात्परामिव दशां मदनोऽध्युवास॥ ५-६३

tasyādhikārapuruṣaiḥ praṇataiḥ pradiṣṭāṁ
prāgdvāravediviniveśitapūrṇakumbhām|
ramyāṁ raghupratidinidhiḥ sa navopakāryāṁ
bālyātparāmiva daśāṁ madano'dhyuvāsa || 5-63

5-63. King Raghu's heir prince Aja was well served by king Bhoj (of Vidharva). For his stay, Aja was escorted by heralds, who were specially assigned for this purpose by king Bhoj, to the palace which was specially prepared for his lodging. It was richly decorated and well furnished with seats draped in newly woven cloth material, and it was finely prepared, with attention paid to minute details, to welcome the royal guest. At the venue, ornamental vessels with auspicious signs (such as leaves, blades of kush grass, flowers) were strategically placed at the entrance and other spots to add grace to the site.

Prince Aja started living there as if he was a personified form of Kamdeo (the charming and physically attractive god of passion and beauty in heaven) when the latter had passed his childhood days to attain adulthood.

Verse no. 64:

तत्र स्वयंवरसमाहृतराजलोकं कन्याललाम कमनीयमजस्य लिप्सोः।
भावावबोधकलुषा दयितेव रात्रौ निद्रा चिरेण नयनाभिमुखी बभूव॥ ५-६४

tatra svayamvarasamāhṛtarājaloḥkaṁ kanyālalāma kamanīyamajasya lipsoḥ।
bhāvāvabodhakaluṣā dayiteva rātrau nidrā cireṇa nayanābhimukhī babhūva || 5-64

5-64. Aja had difficulty in sleeping that night as his mind was engaged in the thoughts of the maiden whom he imagined as standing in front of the curtain of canopied pavilion at the marriage ceremony called 'Swayambar' where many kings and princes had gathered as competitors, all with an yearning to get her hands in marriage. The young prince was late in sleeping because of these thoughts, as if a damsel representing sleep arrives late to her lover because she does not know how much he needs her.

[Note--Here, 'sleep' is likened to a damsel whom her lover seeks eagerly, but who comes late as she is unaware of the lover's desire for her. It is because prince Aja wanted to sleep but the latter eluded him for quite some time, and he managed to get some sleep only late in the night.

The 'maiden' mentioned in this verse refers to Indumati for whom the marriage ceremony called Swayambar was organised. Aja kept tossing and turning in bed thinking of Indumati, and wondered at the odds and challenges that were there before he could get her in marriage. These thoughts prevented him from sleeping early.]

Verse no. 65:

तं कर्णभूषणनिपीडितपीवरांसं शय्योत्तरच्छदविमर्दकृशाङ्गरागम्।
सूतात्मजाः सवयसः प्रथितप्रबोधं प्राबोधयन्नुषसि वाग्भिरुदारवाचः॥ ५-६५

taṁ karṇabhūṣaṇanipīḍitapīvarāṁsaṁ śayyottaracchadavimardakṛśāṅgarāgam
sūtātmajāḥ savayasāḥ prathitaprabodhaṁ prābodhayannuṣasi
vāgbhirudāravācaḥ || 5-65

5-65. Though late in getting his sleep, but when it finally came prince Aja slept soundly so much so that his earrings left their mark of indentation on his muscular shoulders against which they had pressed because he had slept wearing them. The scented ointment that he had rubbed on his body got rubbed off by the bed sheets as he lay restively turning over and over in the bed.

At dawn, young bards and musicians woke him up by their singing of auspicious songs and playing of musical instruments.

[Note--Briefly, prince Aja was wearing a dishevelled and worn-out look when he woke up in the morning.]

Verse no. 66:

रात्रिर्गता मतिमतां वर मुञ्च शय्यां धात्रा दिवधैव ननु धूर्जगतो विभक्ता।
तामेकतस्तव बिभर्ति गुरुर्विनिद्रस्तस्या भवानपरधुर्यपदावलम्बी॥ ५-६६

rātrirgatā matimatām vara muñca śayyām dhātrā dvidhaiva nanu dhūrjagato
vibhaktā
tāmekatastava bibharti gururvinidrastasyā bhavānaparadhuryapadāvalambī || 5-
66

5-66. The assembled bards called out to Aja: "Oh prince Aja! You are foremost amongst wise, intelligent and talented persons. The night has passed over, hence it is time for you to get up and leave your bed. The creator Brahma has divided the responsibility of taking care of this world into two--your great father king Raghu is carrying out one half of this responsibility by waking up at dawn, and you must wake up to carry out the second half.

[Note--Sleeping late into the morning is for lazy, indolent and incompetent people, but for those who are smart and active, as well as intelligent and wise, it makes sense to get up early so that they can put to good use every single hour of the day. Rising early at dawn makes a man fresh and ready to face the duties and responsibilities of the world during the day.]

Verse no. 67:

निद्रावशेन भवताप्यनवेक्षमाणा पर्युत्सुकत्वमबला निशि खण्डितेव।
लक्ष्मीर्विनोदयति येन दिगन्तलम्बी सोऽपि त्वदाननरुचिं विजहाति चन्द्रः॥ ५-६७

nidrāvaśena bhavatāpyanavekṣamāṇā paryutsukatvamabalā niśi khaṇḍiteva
lakṣmīrvinodayati yena digantalambī so'pi tvadānanaruciṁ vijahāti candrah || 5-
67

5-67. The pretty damsel representing your natural youthful charm was disheartened when you forgot about her, and instead courted another damsel representing sleep. So the first damsel consoled herself by gazing at the full moon that bears close resemblance to your youthful charm while you remained in the embrace of the other damsel. But that moon too is now setting in the western horizon, making the poor damsel representing your youthful charm very distraught and helpless.

Being wise and intelligent, you must share your time equally between the two damsels to keep both of them happy and pleased. Hence, now you must wake up to take care of the second damsel who looks forlorn and lost without your attention on her.

[Note--The bards wish to politely wake Aja up by telling him that it is now time to get up and dress so that his youthful charm could shine once again. Late sleeping is bad for health, they seem to say. The prince has to dress and groom himself so that he can attend the swayambar ceremony which was to start soon.]

Verse no. 68:

तद्वल्गुना युगपदुन्मिषितेन तावत्-सद्यः परस्परतुलामधिरोहतां द्वे
प्रस्पन्दमानपरुषेतरतारमन्तश्चक्षुस्तव प्रचलितभ्रमरं च पद्मम्॥ ५-६८

tadvalgunā yugapadunmiṣitena tāvat-sadyaḥ parasparatulāmadhirohatām dve
prasbandamānaparuṣetaratāramantaścakṣustava pracalitabhramaram ca
padmam || 5-68

5-68. When you wake up to see this damsel representing your youthful charm, your beautiful eyes would open up just like the petals of a beautiful lotus flower does at the sight of the sun after remaining closed for the night. And when the black pupils of your eyes start moving here and there, they would resemble the black bees that hover around the opened petals of the lotus flower.

[Note--In this analogy, Aja's beautiful eyes are likened to a lotus flower. The lotus opens its petals as day breaks, and likewise Aja would open his eyelids when he wakes up as the sun rises. The black pupils of his eyes are compared to the black bees gazing at the lotus flower in the hope of finding nectar, so likewise the prince would gaze at the princess Indumati at the venue of the marriage ceremony in the hope of getting her in marriage.

The heralds and bards exhort prince Aja to get up from bed, and dress himself up to get ready to attend the marriage ceremony.]

Verse no. 69:

वृन्ताच्छलथं हरति पुष्पमनोकहानां
संसृज्यते सरसिजैररुणांशुभिन्नैः
स्वाभाविकं परगुणेन विभातवायुः
सौरभ्यमीप्सुरिव ते मुखमारुतस्य॥ ५-६९

vṛntācchlatham harati puṣpamanokahānām
saṁsṛjyate sarasijairaruṇāṁśubhinnaiḥ
svābhāvikam paraguṇena vibhātavāyuh
saurabhyamīpsuriva te mukhamārutasya || 5-69

5-69. After the calmness of the night, a pleasant morning breeze is blowing softly. It shakes the branches of the trees gently, resulting in the flowers falling down on the ground. And at the same time, this breeze also softly wafts over the lotus flowers which have opened their petals at the appearance of the sun in the sky. It seems that since you are still asleep, the morning breeze, in its futile attempt to smell the fragrance emanating from your charming face by caressing it, had decided to replace that pleasant experience by softly blowing over flowers, including the lotus flower.

[Note--In this analogy, prince Aja's face is likened to a flower, including the lotus flower, which are used by poets as metaphors for beauty, purity and charm. Since Aja is still asleep, the breeze did not wish to disturb him, and therefore it selected an alternative in the form of the flowers on the trees as well as the lotus flower to derive some consolation.

By citing the morning breeze and the dropping of flowers, as well as the opened lotus flower which only opens its petals when the sun is seen in the sky, the bards and heralds politely cajole Aja to wake up from his sleep as it is daytime, and the sun is already high in the eastern sky; the hour is past dawn, and the sun is shining brightly, and it's time to leave the bed and get ready for the day's activities.]

Verse no. 70:

ताम्रोदरेषु पतितं तरुपल्लवेषु निर्धौतहारगुलिकाविशदं हिमाम्भः

आभाति लब्धपरभागतयाधरोष्ठे लीलास्मितं सदशनार्चिरिव त्वदीयम्॥ ५-७०

tāmrodareṣu patitaṁ tarupallaveṣu nirdhautahāragulikāviśadaṁ himāmbhaḥ
ābhāti labdhaparabhāgatayādharoṣṭhe līlāsmitaṁ sadaśanārciriva tvadīyam || 5-70

5-70. The dew drops, which are as magnificent as pearls, have collected on the red-coloured leaves of trees that have the hue of copper, and they look extremely wonderful, just like the case of your (prince Aja's) glistening teeth that are set against the backdrop of your pink lips and shine brilliantly when you smile.

[Note--The copper coloured tree and the reddish coloured leaves refer to the betel tree and its leaves. The leaf's botanical name is Piper betle. It is heart-shaped, symbolising love and passion. The betel leaf is regarded as auspicious and used in all religious ceremonies. The other tree that may be referred to here is the mango tree and its leaves. The leaf is also used in religious ceremonies concurrently with the betel leaf. The colour of the young, fresh leaves of both these trees have a reddish, coppery and dark green colour, depending upon their age and angle of sunlight.

In this verse, the pink lips of prince Aja are compared to these leaves, and his well aligned and perfectly white teeth to the pearl-like dew drops that settle on the fresh leaves in early morning hours.]

Verse no. 71:

यावत्प्रतापनिधिराक्रमते न भानुरहनाय तावदरुणेन तमो निरस्तम्

आयोधनाग्रसरतां त्वयि वीर याते किं वा रिपूंस्तव गुरुः स्वयमुच्छिनत्ति॥ ५-७१

yāvatpratāpanidhirākramate na bhānurahnāya tāvadaruṇena tamo nirastam
āyodhanāgrasaratām tvayi vīra yāte kiṁ vā ripūṁstava guruḥ svayamucchinatti
|| 5-71

5-71. Before the arrival of the splendorous and radiant Sun-God in the sky, his charioteer named Arun ensures that the darkness of the night is removed, thereby clearing the path

for the Sun-God's arrival. It is definitely in fitness of things because a loyal, intelligent and competent servant is one who would always ensure that all routine affairs are taken care of so that his master or lord does not have to take the trouble of doing such routine things himself (as clearing the path by removing the darkness of the night).

Oh brave warrior (prince Aja)! With you as a brilliant, skilled and brave warrior son like you, say why would your esteemed father, king Raghu, have to worry about slaying enemies in the battle-field when you are there to take care of such small things?

[Note--The bards and heralds mean that just like the case of king Raghu not having to worry about eliminating enemies when his faithful son Aja is there to take care of this thing in the battle-field, thereby clearing the path of victory for king Raghu, so is the case with the Sun-God and his charioteer Arun. The faithful Arun ensures that the darkness of the night is eliminated before the arrival of the Sun-God in the sky.

In Hindu mythology, Arun is a personification of dawn. Dawn is that hour when the darkness of the previous night begins to fade away and is gradually replaced by light that heralds the actual arrival of the Sun-God in the horizon.

Verse no. 72:

शय्यां जहत्युभयपक्षविनीतनिद्राः स्तम्बेरमा मुखरशृङ्खलकर्षिणस्ते।

येषां विभाति तरुणारुणरागयोगाद्भिन्नाद्रिगैरिकतटा इव दन्तकोशाः॥ ५-७२

śayyām jahatyubhayapakṣavinītanidrāḥ stamberamā mukharaśṛṅkhalakarsṇaste
yeṣām vibhāti taruṇāruṇarāgayogādbhinnādrigairikatāṭā iva dantakośāḥ ||
5-72

5-72. The mighty elephants of your army had stretched left and right and finally got up by pulling the chains that had been tied on them with the purpose of restraining them. In the process, these elephants had pulled and shaken the chains so much that they made loud clanging and clanking sounds. The polished tusks of these elephants shine with a reddish hue when the early sun's light is reflected from them, and they appear to be rocks consisting of minerals that have been cut-off from the sides of mountains.

[Note--Some mountains have minerals, and when sunlight falls at an angle on the flat sides of the rocks of these mountains, especially as the sun rises in the morning and its light goes on increasing gradually, these rocks reflect this light as if they were polished. Similarly, the tusks also reflect the early sun's rays which are reddish-yellow in colour, giving the impression of minerals present in the mountain rocks.

The bards and heralds tell prince Aja that his army has also woken up, and so its commander, the prince, ought to get ready to take charge.]

Verse no. 73:

दीर्घेष्वमी नियमिताः पटमण्डपेषु निद्रां विहाय वनजाक्ष वनायुदेश्याः।
वक्त्रोष्मणा मलिनयन्ति पुरोगतानि लेह्यानि सैन्धवशिलाशकलानि वाहाः॥ ५-७३

dīrghēṣvamī niyamitāḥ paṭamaṇḍapeṣu nidrām vihāya vanajākṣa vanāyudeśyāḥ
vaktroṣmaṇā malinayanti purogatāni lehyāni saindhavaśilāśakalāni vāhāḥ ||
5-73

5-73. Oh lotus-eyed prince Aja (vanajākṣa)! The well bred horses of your army, who have their origin in the land of Persia, and were haltered in spacious tents made with fine cloth, they too have abandoned their sleep. These horses are smelling the white crystalline salts placed before them, and by their warm breath they turn the white salt into black (as if the salt crystals have been put into fire pit of an oven).

[Note--Persian horses are very well built, tall, robust and muscular. These steeds are much sought after in horse fairs and command steep price. When Aja's father had conquered the rulers of the land of Persia and Arabia, including Afghanistan, he had been gifted a large contingent of horses for his cavalry (refer: Canto 4, verse nos. 60-64, 69-71). The heralds and bards are referring to these excellent horses here that have been tethered in royal stables especially erected to accommodate Aja's steeds.

It is common practice by horse tamers to feed their breed of horses with rock salt which has a little dark colour because of its mineral contents, such as potassium. It has a good proportion of potassium chloride in it, besides sodium chloride. It is mined from rocks, hence the name 'rock salt', and is an excellent alternative to pure ordinary salt obtained from salty water of the ocean, which is only sodium chloride. It is done to replenish essential electrolytes lost through sweat, and to support proper muscular and nerve function of the horses. It also ensures adequate water intake to prevent dehydration, muscular cramps and colic during long campaigns for which these Persia horses are usually employed. The rock salt is mixed with horse-meal to provide taste and adequate supply of essential nutrients to the animal. The amount of salt required by a horse depends on its needs--because the more strenuous activities it undertakes, such as long rides and wars, the more is the need for electrolyte balance in the animal's body.]

Verse no. 74:

भवति विरलभक्तिर्म्लानपुष्पोपहारः स्वकिरणपरिवेषोद्भेदशून्याः प्रदीपाः।
अयमपि च गिरं नस्त्वत्प्रबोधप्रयुक्ता-मनुवदति शुकस्ते मञ्जुवाक्पञ्जरस्थः॥ ५-७४

bhavati viralabhaktirmṛlānapuṣpopahāraḥ svakiraṇapariveṣodbhedaśūnyāḥ
pradīpāḥ
ayamapi ca giram nastvatprabodhaprayuktā-manuvadati śukaste
mañjuvākpañjarasthaḥ || 5-74

5-74. The flowers that have been brought in large heaps for you during the night have started withering away. The night lamps have begun to lose their illumination in the

background of the brilliant sunlight. And your favourite parrot stationed in its cage is also sweetly repeating our verses requesting you to wake you up from sleep. So oh lord, please shed your sleep and wake up."

[Note--Three things are cited in this verse to alert Aja that it is getting late in the morning and he should wake up from his sleep. One is the basket full of flowers that had been collected during the night to be showered on the royal guest when he steps out of his camp in the morning; since it is getting late, these flowers are drying up and withering away. The other thing is the oil lamps that were lit to illuminate the palace during night hours. Since it is day time by now, these oil lamps had lost their shine. And the third element is the parrot who is repeating the words of the bards and heralds asking the prince to get up from bed.]

Verse no. 75:

**इति विरचितवाग्भिर्बन्दिपुत्रैः कुमारः सपदि विगतनिद्रस्तल्पमुज्झांचकार।
मदपटुनिनदद्भिर्बोधितो राजहंसैः सुरगज इव गाङ्गं सैकतं सुप्रतीकः॥ ५-७५**

iti viracitavāgbhirbandiputraiḥ kumāraḥ sapadi vigatanidrastalpamujjhāṁcakāra
madapaṭuninadadbhirbodhito rājahamsaiḥ suragaja iva gāṅgaṁ saikataṁ
supratikaḥ || 5-75

5-75. In this way, when the bards and heralds had used poetical words to politely urge prince Aja to get up from his bed, he immediately got up just like the heavenly elephant named Supratik hastily wakes up on the sandy banks of the heavenly river called 'Akash Ganga' (the river flowing across the sky in the heavens) when he hears the sweet crackling of royal swans flying away in formation overhead.

[Note--In Indian mythology, the Akash Ganga corresponds to the Milky Way Galaxy. It is believed to be the cradle of our creation. It stretches across the sky as a hazy, luminous band, and consists of 100-400 billion stars. In ancient mythological narrative, it is the river of the gods, flowing through heaven, and often regarded as a visible heavenly manifestation of the holy terrestrial river known as the Ganges, the latter being merely a stream of the heavenly river called Akash Ganga flowing in the heaven.

According to traditional accounts of the epic Mahabharat War, the Supratik elephant was a mighty war elephant that participated in this famous war, and fought on the side of the Kaurav's army. Due to its stupendous strength, it unleashed havoc on the army of the Pandavas and even crushed the chariot of Bhima, the famed Pandava warrior renowned for his strength and prowess; this happened on the 14th day of the war. It was eventually killed by Arjun, the lead Pandava warrior.

Another mythological account links Supratik with the Diggajas, the 8 elephants guarding the eight quarters of the world: north, north-west, west, south-west, south, south-east, east and north-east. Supratik is the Diggaj appointed to guard the north-eastern flank of the earth. In ancient texts, this elephant was under the command of the then ruler of an ancient state which corresponds to Assam in modern India.]

Verse no. 76:

अथ विधिमवसाय्य शास्त्रदृष्टं दिवसमुखोचितमञ्जिताक्षिपक्ष्मा
कुशलविरचितानुकूलवेशः क्षितिपसमाजमगात्स्वयंवरस्थम्॥ ५-७६

atha vidhimavasāyya śāstradr̥ṣṭam divasamukhocitamañcitākṣipakṣmā
kuśalaviracitānukūlaveśaḥ kṣitipasamājamagātsvayaṁvarastham || 5-76

5-76. After leaving his bed, the young prince Aja, who had charming eye-lids like that of an open lotus flower, quickly undertook the routine rituals that are done in the morning, groomed himself and put on a royal dress suitable for the occasion, a dress that was specially tailor-made for him by royal style experts, and then stepped out to be escorted to the venue of the marriage ceremony called Swayambar where other royals had collected to participate in the ceremony.

[Note--As has been pointed out earlier too, the Swayambar ceremony is one in which the bride has the right to choose her partner from amongst the assembled suitors.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये पंचमः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye pañcamah sargaḥ

Thus ends the 5th canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-86:

Introduction

This canto no. 6 describes the Swayambar ceremony of princess Indumati. The Swayambar was an ancient system of marriage in which the bride had the choice to select her own groom from the assembled suitors. These suitors were seated in rows, and the would be bride would hold a garland in her hand, and accompanied by her maids, friends or confidantes move from one person to another. She would go around twice; during the first round she would get a first-hand view of the competitors, and in case she wished to ask any question she could briefly interview them. In the second round, she would put the garland on the person she selects as her groom.

Prince Aja dressed and groomed himself elegantly for the occasion, and escorted by royal guards he went to the venue where Indumati was to select her groom. A large number of princes had collected there, each eager to get Indumati's hand in marriage. Finally, she

appeared holding a victory garland in her hands; she was accompanied by her chamberlain and trusted maid named Sunanda. She went from one prince to another, and when she reached prince Aja she put the garland around his neck, much to the chagrin of other princes. There was a mighty applause of approval from the citizens who had gathered in strength, but the competing suitors felt humiliated.

When Aja arrived at the venue, his exceptional charm, dignified manners and magnetic personality were so magnificent that all other princes lost hope of attracting the attention of Indumati. Aja was given a special gem-studded throne-like seat with a back-support resembling the fully open plumes of a peacock. Every eye was riveted on prince Aja, and it seemed that he had cast a magic spell on the spectators, both the citizens as well as the competing princes.

When all were seated, the royal bards began to narrate a litany of achievements and glories of the major dynasties whose princes had collected there. This eulogising narrative was followed by playing of royal musical bands, and the arena was sprayed with fragrance.

In the meanwhile, Indumati arrived in a palanquin with her trusted maid and chamberlain named Sunanda. She went upto and stood on the central platform specially made for her so that the entire assembly could see her. It was intentionally done with two purposes in mind--the first was that the guest princes could see and judge for themselves the excellence of the prize they would get if they succeed, and second, Indumati too could glance around and narrow down her choice as far as possible, probably by discussing the matter with her trusted aide.

The assembled princes began to show-off themselves by different gestures and body-languages so as to draw Indumati's attention. Though the princes thought that they had managed to impress Indumati and had conveyed to her how powerful, glorious and wonderful they were, but their manoeuvrings had a negative impact on the princess who disliked the idea of self-show or self-promoting or self-advertisement by these princes, and decided that all of them were not suitable for her.

As the proceedings got underway, Sunanda accompanied Indumati from one prince to another, and introduced each one to her, briefly telling the princess the qualities and glories of each one of them. The princes of the major dynasties who had collected at the venue were from the kingdoms of Magadh, Anga, Ujjain, Anup, Mathura, Kalinga, and Ayodhya.

When Indumati got in front of prince Aja, she was so captivated by the prince's inherent charm and modesty that she instantly decided that this is the prince she would marry, and refusing to move ahead to see other assembled princes, she put the victory garland around Aja's neck. At that moment, the assembly presented a stark contrast--for on one side were the exhilarated citizens and the family of king Bhoj, and on the other side were the disheartened princes who had failed to marry Indumati. It was like the case of contrasting views of a pond in the morning hours when the sun has risen in the sky--while the lotus

flowers open their petals when the sun rises, the water lilies close their petals because they open in the night. In this analogy, the family of Indumati, the companions of Aja, and the citizens of Vidharva were cheerful and gleaming with happiness symbolised by the blooming of the lotus flower, while the defeated princes were like the water lilies, sullen, crest-fallen and disheartened.

Though not mentioned explicitly, but implicitly it is quite possible that prince Aja had employed the 'Sammohan Astra' on Indumati. This was a magical weapon of hypnotism that casts a spell of charm on the opposite party so that the latter comes in the control of the user of this weapon and does his bidding. It was given to him by Priyadarshan, the son of a Ghandharva, just a few days ago (refer: canto 5, verse no. 57).

There is another possibility why Indumati had decided to choose prince Aja over all other suitors. Her brother, king Bhoj, was interested in marrying his sister to the scion of the Solar Race of Ayodhya so that a formidable alliance between two powerful kingdoms could be forged. He had already heard of king Raghu's (father of Aja) military campaign called 'Digvijay' when he had conquered all the four directions of the Indian peninsula. When prince Aja arrived to attend the Swayambar ceremony, king Bhoj had also rolled out a red-carpet for him, a privilege not shown to other princes. So in all probability therefore, he had taken his sister Indumati in confidence and told her about his wish. This is the probable reason why Indumati would pass over all the other princes of great kingdoms without a second thought, and zeroed down on prince Aja to immediately decide to choose him as soon as she reached him. To make her choice easy and to avoid any last-minute confusion or mix-up, king Bhoj had earmarked a special peacock-themed seat for Aja so that Indumati's choice can be easily made.

With this background information, now let us start reading canto 6 verse-by-verse in detail as follows:

Verse no. 1:

स तत्र मञ्चेषु मनोजवेषान्सिंहासनस्थानुपचारवत्सु
वैमानिकानाम् मरुतामपश्यदाकृष्टलीलान्नरलोकपालान्॥ ६-१

sa tatra mañceṣu manojñaveṣānsimhāsanasthānupacāravatsu|
vaimānikānām marutāmapaśyadākṛṣṭalīlānnaralokapālān || 6-1

6-1. When prince Aja arrived at the venue (of the Swayambar ceremony), he noticed that a large number of great kings and princes had already been seated on decorated thrones accompanied by royal regalia befitting their statures, and all of them looked as magnificent as many gods sitting on their respective planes.

Verse no. 2:

रतेर्गृहीतानुनयेन कामम् प्रत्यर्पितस्वाङ्गमिवेश्वरेण।
काकुत्स्थमालोकयताम् नृपाणाम् मनो बभूवेन्दुमतीनिराशम्॥ ६-२

ratergrhītānunayena kāmam pratyarpitasvāṅgamiveśvareṇa |
kākutsthāmālokeyatām nṛpāṇām mano babhūvendumatīnirāśam || 6-2

6-2. Prince Aja's beautiful, charming and captivating form resembled that of Kamdeo (the god of beauty, passion and love) who had been reborn and got a fresh lease of life when his consort Rati had prayed to Lord Shiva to forgive her husband for his mistakes and revive him¹. When the rest of the assembled princes and kings saw prince Aja, they quietly lost hope of being able to draw Indumati's attention on themselves.

{Just as Kamdeo stood out in the assembly of gods, so did prince Aja also stood out in the assembly of these princes who had gathered to marry Indumati.}

[Note--¹This episode is narrated in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', in its Baal Kand (canto 1), Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82--to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88. Briefly, the story is that once Lord Shiva had got annoyed with Kamdeo because of his frolicking around and making attempts to break Shiva's meditation, as a result of which the Lord cursed him and reduced him to ashes. Rati then pleaded with the Lord to revive her husband, and merciful and kind as Lord Shiva is, he blessed Rati that her husband would be revived in the next era when Lord Krishna would be born.]

Verse no. 3:

वैदर्भनिर्दिष्टमसौ कुमारः क्लृप्तेन सोपानपथेन मञ्चम्।
शिलाविभङ्गैर्मृगराजशावस्तुङ्गम् नगोत्सङ्गमिवारूरोह॥ ६-३

vaidarbhanirdiṣṭamasau kumāraḥ klṛptena sopānapathena mañcam |
śilāvibhaṅgairmṛgarājaśāvastuṅgam nagotsaṅgamivārūroha || 6-3

6-3. Prince Aja stepped on decorated steps to reach a high seat specially designated for him by the host king Bhoj, just like a lion's young male cub steps on the rocks on the hill side, mounting one step at a time in a dignified and majestic style, to finally reach the top of the hill where it sits down.

[Note--The seat earmarked for prince Aja was specially erected for him, and just by its physical characteristics it was evident to everyone that the prince who was to sit on this seat was a special invitee of the host king Bhoj. So therefore, as soon as prince Aja mounted this seat, it became virtually apparent to all other competing princes that in all probabilities he was the chosen one, and the Swayambar was organised just to conform to traditions. And so, quietly they lost hope for themselves.]

Verse no. 4:

पराध्वर्णास्तरणोपपन्नमासेदिवान्नवदासनम् सः।
भूयिष्ठमासीदुपमेयकान्तिर्मयूरपृष्ठाश्रयिणा गुहेन॥ ६-४

parārdhyavarṇāstaraṇopapannamāsedivānratnavadāsanam sah|
bhūyiṣṭhamāsīdupameyakāntirmayūrprṣṭhāśrayiṇā guhena || 6-4

6-4. The seat earmarked for prince Aja resembled a golden throne, complete with its gem-studded sides and hand-rests, and a very costly velvety cushioned seat. Sitting on this throne-like seat, prince Aja looked as glorious as Kartikeya (the son of Lord Shiva) riding on the back of his mount, a peacock.

[Note--Kartikeya is a warrior son of Lord Shiva, has a very charming appearance, and mounts a peacock. By citing this particular mount of Kartikeya, the poet suggests that the seat of prince Aja was also designed to resemble a peacock, i.e. it was a 'peacock throne'. Its back had the design of the fully open colourful plumes of a peacock.]

Verse no. 5:

तासु श्रिया राजपरंपरासु प्रभाविशेषोदयदुर्निरीक्ष्यः।
सहस्रधात्मा व्यरुचद्विभक्तः पयोमुचाम् पङ्क्तिषु विद्युतेव॥ ६-५

tāsu śriyā rājaparaṁparāsu prabhāviśeṣodayadurnirīkṣyaḥ|
sahasradhātmā vyarucadvibhaktaḥ payomucām paṅktiṣu vidyuteva || 6-5

6-5. The eye-catching glamorous appearances and the dazzle created by the gem-studded royal robes of all the princes assembled at the venue were so radiant and magnificent that it seemed that the deity of glamour and beauty had shared her magnificence equally amongst them all, just like the case of the lightening which shares its brilliance by spreading its light throughout the body of the dark clouds that appear in the sky.

[Note--It is often observed that when the banks of clouds are thick, the lightening through them appears as a diffused light that spreads through the body of the cloud, instead of being localised to some particular area of the cloud. But still, the main energy of the lightening appears like a long thread of brilliant light streaking through the sky, and its light is so brilliant that all the surrounding clouds become illuminated. Finally, the lightening shoot towards the earth and strikes at a specific spot with a brilliance and dazzle that is blinding.

Presently, prince Aja's majestic and glamorous appearance was like the particular spot where the lightening strikes on the surface of the earth with its blinding, dazzling brilliance, while the glamour and majesty of all other princes seemed to be faded in comparison to prince Aja's, and were like the diffused light of the streak of lightening that illuminates the rest of the cloud.]

Verse no. 6:

तेषाम् महार्हासनसंस्थितानामुदारनेपथ्यभृताम् स मध्ये।
रराज धाम्ना रघुसूनुरेव कल्पद्रुमाणामिव पारिजातः॥ ६-६

teṣām mahārhāsanasaṁsthitānāmudāranepathyabhṛtām sa madhye।
rarāja dhāmnā raghusūnureva kalpadrumāṇāmiva pārijātaḥ || 6-6

6-6. It was only prince Aja who looked remarkable and outstanding amongst all the assembled princes attired in their fine royal regalia, just like the case of the Parijaat tree that stands out amongst all the trees in the heavenly garden called Nandan-Van.

[Note--The Nandan-Van is the garden of gods in heaven. The word 'Nandan' means one that gives pleasure, and 'Van' means a forest or garden rich with trees.

The 'Parijaat tree' is the evergreen tree of the gods. It is a night-flowering jasmine tree. It is also called the tree from paradise. According to ancient tradition, it originated during the ancient churning of the celestial ocean, and is said to be wish-fulfilling.

Just like the case of the Parijaat tree which is one of its kind in the heavenly garden of the gods, prince Aja too stood out amongst all the princes assembled at the venue.]

Verse no. 7:

नेत्रव्रजाः पौरजनस्य तस्मिन्विहाय सर्वान्नृपतीन्निपेतुः।
मदोत्कटे रेचितपुष्पवृक्षा गन्धद्विपे वन्य इव द्विरेफाः॥ ६-७

netravrajāḥ pauraṇasasya tasminvihāya sarvānnṛpatīnnipetuḥ।
madotkaṭe recitapuṣpavṛkṣā gandhadvipe vanya iva dvirephāḥ || 6-7

6-7. The eyes of the assembled crowd of citizens moved away from gazing at the many well-groomed and decked-up princes of the various dynasties who had collected at the venue, and instead focused on the exceptionally form of prince Aja, just like the case of black bees who abandon hovering over and alighting on the blooming flowers of trees in search of pollen and nectar, and instead fix their attention on an elephant nearby from whose temple a scented viscous liquid called ichor seeps out, the enticing fragrance of which attracts the black bees to such an extent that they move away in droves from the trees and veer towards the elephant where they start buzzing and hovering over the animal's head, as well as alighting on its temple in order to directly get in touch with and enjoy the ichor.

[Note--Such a development has been cited in canto 5, verse no. 43 in the context of a wild elephant who had to jump into the water of river Narmada when he became mad due to a large swarm of black bees hovering and buzzing all over his head, in order to get rid of this nuisance.]

Verse no. 8:

अथ स्तुते बन्दिभिरन्वयजैः सोमार्कवंश्ये नरदेवलोके
संचारिते चागुरुसारयोनौ धूपे समुत्सर्पति वैजयन्तीः॥ ६-८

atha stute bandibhiranvayajñaiḥ somārkavaṁśye naradevaloke|
saṁcārite cāgurusārayonau dhūpe samutsarpati vaijayantīḥ || 6-8

7-8. After the assembly was seated, the royal bards read out litanies of the various achievements and glories of the different dynasties and races to which the assembled princes belonged, such as the Surya Vansha and the Chandra Vansha (i.e. solar race and the lunar race respectively).

In the meanwhile, scented essential oil of the Agar-wood tree (Aquilaria trees), which has a rich and luxurious fragrance, was burnt in large vessels, and its smoke rose as high up as the many flags and banners used to decorate the venue from all the sides, thereby filling the atmosphere with its sweet, pleasant and captivating aroma.

Verse no. 9:

पुरोपकण्टोपवनाश्रयाणाम् कलापिनामुद्धतनृत्तहेतौ
प्रध्मातशङ्खे परितो दिगन्तांस्तूर्यस्वने मूर्च्छति मङ्गलार्थे॥ ६-९

puropakaṇṭopavanāśrayāṇām kalāpināmuddhatanṛttahetau|
pradhmatāśaṅkhe parito digantāṁstūryasvane mūrcchati maṅgalārthe||6-9

6-9. The celebratory sound of musical instruments resonated in all the ten directions¹ of the realm, along with the auspicious sound of blowing of conch shells. This created such a cheerful atmosphere of celebrations and auspiciousness that the peacocks residing in all the gardens that dotted the outskirts of the city joined in by dancing in merry abundance to indicate their joyful participation in the universal celebratory atmosphere that prevailed at the time in the realm. [6-9]

[Note—¹The ‘ten directions’ mean all the directions of the compass—viz. north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir. In essence, it means ‘everywhere’.]

Verse no. 10:

मनुष्यवाह्यम् चतुरन्तयानमध्यास्य कन्या परिवारशोभि
विवेश मञ्चान्तराजमार्गम् पतिंवरा क्लृप्तविवाहवेषा॥ ६-१०

manuṣyavāhyam caturantayānamadhyāsyā kanyā parivāraśobhi|
viveśa mañcāntararājamārgam patimvarā kṛptavivāhaveṣā || 6-10

6-10. In the meantime, princess Indumati arrived at the venue of the Swayambar ceremony where the bride had the privilege of selecting her own groom from amongst the assembled suitors. She was finely dressed befitting the occasion, and was carried to the central platform, along the path lined by competing suitors on both the sides, in a shoulder-held palanquin that was borne by royal bearers of excellent pedigree.

Verse no. 11:

तस्मिन्विधानातिशये विधातुः कन्यामये नेत्रशतैकलक्ष्ये|
निपेतुरन्तःकरणैर्नरेन्द्रा देहैः स्थिताः केवलमासनेषु॥ ६-११

tasminvidhānātiśaye vidhātuḥ kanyāmaye netraśataikalakṣye|
nipeturantaḥkaraṇairnareन्द्रā dehaiḥ sthitāḥ kevalamāsaneṣu || 6-11

6-11. The beautiful maiden Indumati was the cynosure of hundreds of eyes that were all fixed on her. She was like a personified form of the best example of the creator Brahma's creative skills in this creation. No sooner did the princes saw Indumati, than they became enamoured of her so much that they virtually lost their hearts to her, with only their physical bodies remaining seated on their respective seats.

Verse no. 12:

ताम् प्रत्यभिव्यक्तमनोरथानां महीपतीनाम् प्रणयाग्रदूत्यः|
प्रवालशोभा इव पादपानां शृङ्गारचेष्टा विविधा बभूवुः॥ ६-१२

tām pratyabhivvyaktamanorathānām mahīpatīnām praṇayāgradūtyaḥ |
pravālaśobhā iva pādapānām śṛṅgāraceṣṭā vividhā babhūvuḥ || 6-12

6-12. The assembled princes tried to express their appreciation of Indumati and their ardent desire to have her hands in marriage by the means of various amorous gestures and body-languages they adopted as if they were sending feelers to her to accept them as her groom. Their attempts to woo Indumati by their different posturing and manoeuvring was like the case of different trees trying to attract the attention of the beholder by showcasing their uniqueness with the help of their colourful leaves that sway majestically in a soft breeze.

[Note--The analogy is remarkable. In a garden there are different kinds of trees, each with its own characteristic features and beauty. When a visitor arrives, he would see all the trees one-by-one, and would be naturally attracted by the tree which has the best external features symbolised by its leaves. So likewise, these princes adopted various means to attract Indumati's attention towards themselves, and at the same time convey to her their love for her and the desire to have her hands in marriage.]

{In the verses that follow, from verse no. 13 to verse no. 19, we read how the voluptuous princes employed various erotic gestures to show their passion for Indumati. Some of them exhibited vanity and inexperience by their demeanour, and others exhibited simply crude and uncultured behaviour that no prince worth his salt would engage in. They had hoped to impress princess Indumati and make her interested in them, but all such manoeuvring had a negative effect on the princess who treated all such gestures as an open display of vulgarity and immodesty, of vanity and cheapness, and as being crude and rude. She therefore loathed all of them as being too cheap and outrageous, and totally unbecoming of true blue-blooded noble princes who were supposed to be born in a great royal families of high pedigree, princes worthy of being would-be-grooms for her.}

Verse no. 13:

कश्चित्कराभ्यामुपगूढनालमालोलपत्राभिहतदिवरेफम्।

रजोभिरन्तः परिवेषबन्धि लीलारविन्दम् भ्रमयांचकार॥ ६-१३

kaścitkarābhyāmupagūḍhanālamālolapatrābhihatadvirepham।

rajobhirantaḥ pariveṣabandhi līlāravindam bhramayāmcakāra || 6-13

6-13. One of the princes began to twirl the fresh lotus flower that he held by its stalk between the palms of his hand, as a result of which the petals of the flower acted like fans to chase away the bees that were either hovering over or clinging to it, and at the same time the rotation caused the pollen grains stored in the anther of the flower to spring out and spread all around like a fragrant cloud surrounding the prince.

[Note--By this gesture, the prince indicated his pure love for Indumati, conveying the message that if she marries him, she can rest assured that the prince would show her the best of love she can expect from anyone, and he would shoo away all other ladies who try to woo him; he would focus his attention exclusively on her, making her his chief queen. The lotus flower symbolises purity and beauty.

The many bees that were hovering over the flower, and some even sitting on its petals, all of whom were driven away when the prince began rotating the stalk of the lotus, implied that there were already many maidens who wanted to come close to him and marry him, but now that he has seen Indumati, he has decided to chase them all away and offer this privilege to her.

The pollen is produced and stored in the anther on top of the stamen of a male flower. Since it is the male flower that produces and stores the pollen, its springing out from its sac and spreading all over is a metaphoric way to indicate how excited the prince was to wed and impregnate Indumati. It is a poetic visualisation of the erotic meaning of the prince's gesture.]

Verse no. 14:

विस्रस्तमंसादपरो विलासी रत्नानुविद्धाङ्गदकोटिलग्नम्।

प्रालम्बमुत्क्रष्य यथावकाशम् निनाय साचीकृतचारुवक्त्रः॥ ६-१४

visrastamaṁsādaparo vilāśī ratnānuviddhāṅgadakoṭilagnam।

prālabhamutkr̥ṣya yathāvakāśam nināya sācīkṛtacāruvaktraḥ || 6-14

6-14. Another voluptuary prince showed his amorous desires by holding one end of his richly embroidered stole (a long scarf), that had slipped down from his shoulders and got entangled in his gem-studded arm-band, and gently lifting it to his lips before draping it back around his neck like a garland.

[Note--The idea he wanted to convey is simple and straightforward. His message was that he and Indumati would embrace each other so tightly that the upper halves of the garments of both the prince and the princess would slip down. Then he would lift her in his arms, kiss her passionately, and sling her arms around his own neck, or conversely sling his own arms around her neck. As is obvious, it was a vulgar display of passion and lust, and surely it would have gone down wrong with the princess who treated it as immodesty of the highest order. So was the case with all other princes.]

Verse no. 15:

आकुञ्चिताग्राङ्गुलिना ततोऽन्यः किञ्चित्समावर्जितनेत्रशोभः।

तिर्यग्विसंसर्पिनखप्रभेण पादेन हैमम् विलिलेख पीठम्॥ ६-१५

ākuñcitāgrāṅgulinā tato'nyaḥ kiñcitsamāvarjitanetraśobhaḥ।

tiryagvisarṁsarpinakhaprabheṇa pādena haimam vililekha pīṭham || 6-15

6-15. The third prince lowered his eyes sheepishly, shyly, as if he lacked self-confidence. Then he began to move the well-cut and pointed tip of his golden-polished toe nails on the surface of his golden foot-stool and began scratching on it, as if he was writing something.

[Note--He seemed to be writing a love letter in a symbolic manner. Though his gesture was not as vulgar as that of others we have just read about, yet his shyness amounted to timidity, with lack of courage, boldness and ardour while wooing his lady love, a character that was not to be expected from a bold warrior-knight who believes in breaking walls of forts to reach his mistress. Indumati immediately decided he was not fit for her.]

Verse no. 16:

निवेश्य वामम् भुजमासनार्थं तत्संनिवेशात् अधिकोन्नतांसः।

कश्चिद्विवृत्तत्रिकभिन्नहारः सुहृत्समाभाषणतत्परोऽभूत्॥ ६-१६

niveśya vāmam bhujaṁāsanārdhe tatsaṁniveśāt adhikonnatāṁsaḥ |
kaścidvivṛttatrikabhinnaḥāraḥ suhṛtsamābhāṣaṇatatparo'bhūt || 6-16

6-16. Another prince bent a little towards his left, and resting his left arm on the left side of his seat he began to discuss something with his companion prince sitting next to him. As a result of it, his right shoulder rose, and he looked crooked from a distance where Indumati was standing and watching all the princes closely.

[Note--This gave the impression that this prince had some deformity, or he lacked good manners by the way he sat crookedly and talked with his neighbour, or that he was passing gas due to some gastric issues, or that he seemed to be more interested in gossiping and discussing something with another prince instead of remaining concentrated on the proceedings underway. This was not the time and the venue for conversations, discussions or gossiping. It was a solemn occasion, and dignified behaviour was expected from everyone. Hence, this gesture again went badly with the princess.]

Verse no. 17:

विलासिनीविभ्रमदन्तपत्रमपाण्डुरम् केतकबर्हमन्यः।
प्रियानितम्बोचितसंनिवेशैर्विपाटयामास युवा नखाग्रैः॥ ६-१७

vilāsinīvibhramadantapatramapāṇḍuram ketakabarhamanyaḥ |
priyānitambocitasāṁniveśairvipāṭayāmāsa yuvā nakhāgraiḥ || 6-17

6-17. Another young prince held a fully grown white Ketaki flower, specially designed to be worn as an ornament dangling from the ears of a young passionate maiden, in one hand, and with the nails of his other hand he gently scratched its petals and leaves just like a passionate man would scratch his nails on the muscular and rounded breasts of his female partner, as well as play with her hairs by twisting the hair-pin (made with the leaves of this flower) that she uses to keep her long hairs properly in place.

[Note--The Ketaki plant's botanical name is Pandanus odorifer. It is known as Screw Pine in English or Kedwa in the vernacular Hindi language of India. It is a highly aromatic, yellow-white, waxy or leathery to touch, and cone-shaped flower which is renowned for its sweet and highly aromatic fragrance. Its waxy and cone-shaped structure is likened to the female breast, and by this erotic and rude gesture this prince seemed to tease the princess of how passionately he would arouse her sexual instincts, and give her sensual pleasures. The leaves of this flower are long and spear shaped. They are also used by ladies as hair pins to keep their long tresses in place. So therefore, this gesture implied caressing and sensual arousal.]

Verse no. 18:

कुशेशयाताम्रतलेन कश्चित्करेण रेखाध्वजलाञ्छनेन|
रत्नाङ्गुलीयप्रभयानुविद्वानुदीरयामास सलीलमक्षान्॥ ६-१८

kuśeśayātāmratālena kaścitkareṇa rekhādhvajalāñchanena|
ratnāṅgulīyaprabhayānuviddhānudīrayāmāsa salīlamakṣān || 6-18

6-18. One of the suitor princes whose palms were pink-red (indicating a very healthy body) and on which lines resembling a royal flag were etched, tossed a dice made from gemstone idly from one palm to another. This dice shined with a radiance as it moved from one hand to another, and the glitter of the gem-studded (probably diamonds) finger-rings that the prince wore added a dazzle of light on his hands.

[Note--Playing with a dice and board was a favourite pastime for kings and princes of ancient times, as they had little else to do. The tossing of a dice made of a gemstone which shined brilliantly as it moved from one hand of the prince to his other hand, along with the vivid glittering of light emanating from the finger-rings worn by him, conveyed a subtle message of the wealth that he possessed. But at the same time, it also showed that he was more interested in frittering away his youthful days in such futile and wasteful activities as dice-playing and gambling that only suited elderly kings who were past their prime days, and not to princes who ought to be engaged in manly, dynamic pursuits like participating in active sports and various military manoeuvres that entail a healthy and fit body. This tossing of the dice showed that this prince was lazy, indolent and lethargic, one who preferred games such as gambling that relied more on chance and less on application of the mind and body. Surely, Indumati would not like to have such a partner for herself.]

Verse no. 19:

कश्चिद्यथाभागमवस्थितेऽपि स्वसंनिवेशाद्व्यतिलङ्घिनीव|
वज्रांशुगर्भाङ्गुलिरन्ध्रमेकम् व्यापारयामास करम् किरीटे॥ ६-१९

kaścidyathābhāgamavasthite'pi svasaṁniveśādvyaṭilaṅghinīva|
vajrāṁśugarbhāṅgulirandhramekam vyāpārayāmāsa karam kirīṭe || 6-19

6-19. Some other suitor prince started fidgeting. He repeatedly lifted his arms trying to adjust the crown on his head as if the crown was constantly slipping from its position. In the process, the glittering light emanating from the diamonds and other precious stones studded on the crown reflected on his hands. {To this was added the dazzling light emanating from the gem-studded finger-rings he wore. As a result, his hands, specially his palms and fingers, seemed to be bathed in streaks of light of different colours.}

[Note--Repeatedly lifting of the hands and touching the crown on his head showed that the prince was nervous and uncertain about his physical appearance. It conveyed a sense of anxiety, mental distress and lack of self-confidence. It also indicated that the prince

was not accustomed to wearing a crown on his head, and he has worn it just today, which implies that he has a low pedigree, is not of a royal lineage at all, and is pretending to be a prince just to wed the princess.

Further, on the pretext of adjusting the crown, the prince seemed to show-off the priceless nature of his crown which was richly decorated with diamonds and a variety of other gemstones. The behaviour of the prince amounted to vanity, and it showed him in poor light as it meant that he wished to show-off his wealth by the example of his crown to attract the attention of the princess, instead of exhibiting some tangible signs of his eligibility as a worthy groom for the princess, such as some sign of his royal heritage, his noble breeding, his virtues, qualities and abilities etc. that would be more meaningful for a discerning princess, rather than such cheap display of diamonds and gems studded on a head-gear.

A true-bred prince would sit quietly in a dignified manner. He would show no trace of anxiety or nervousness. His self-confidence and good upbringing would reflect in his quiet and cultured demeanours. Just like the sun not needing someone to point out its presence during the daytime, a true blue-blooded noble prince would not need props to advertise himself and mark his presence.]

Verse no. 20:

ततो नृपाणाम् श्रुतवृत्तवंशा पुंवत्प्रगल्भा प्रतिहाररक्षी
प्राक्संनिकर्षम् मगधेश्वरस्य नीत्वा कुमारीमवदत्सुनन्दा ॥ ६-२०

tato nṛpāṇām śrutavṛttavaṁśā puṁvatpragalbhā pratihārarakṣī |
prākṣaṁnikarṣam magadheśvarasya nītvā kumārīmavadatsunandā || 6-20

6-20. {Now arrived the time when princess Indumati, accompanied by her chamberlain, trusted maid and custodian Sunanda, would go around the venue to face each assembled prince from up close, and if she wanted, even to interact directly with them by asking some short question. This would help her to decide which prince from amongst the competitors she would choose to be her partner in life.}

As the next step in the proceedings, Sunanda, who had been thoroughly briefed about the history, qualities and achievements of all the assembled princes, who was bold as a male escort would have been, and who was a trusted aide of princess Indumati, escorted the latter to go around the venue and have a first-hand meeting with the princes, one by one, who had assembled for the Swayambar ceremony of Indumati. She first approached the prince of the kingdom of Magadha (simply because his seat was nearest to the platform from where the princess and her chamberlain maid descended to make their round amongst the competing princes).

Verse no. 21:

असौ शरण्यः शरणोन्मुखानामगाधसत्त्वो मगधप्रतिष्ठः।

राजा प्रजारञ्जनलब्धवर्णः परंतपो नाम यथार्थनामा ॥ ६-२१

asau śaraṇyaḥ śaraṇonmukhānāmagādhāsattvo magadhapraṭiṣṭhaḥ |
rājā prajārañjanalabdhavarṇaḥ paraṁtapo nāma yathārthanāmā || 6-21

6-21. Sunanda introduced the prince of Magadha to princess Indumati, saying: "This prince protects those who surrender themselves before him. He is famed for his valour. He is the ruler of the kingdom of Magadha, and by giving happiness to his citizens, he has acquired great fame. His name is Parantap, which is a very appropriate name for him as he has instilled fear in his enemies.

[Note--The ancient Magadha kingdom was one of the powerful sixteen empires of ancient India. It was located on the eastern Gangatic plains, corresponded to the present day Gaya districts of India. Its capital was at Rajgir, and it was the centre of the great Mauryan and Gupta dynasties.]

Verse no. 22:

कामम् नृपाः सन्तु सहस्रशोऽन्ये राजन्वतीमाहुरनेन भूमिम्।

नक्षत्रताराग्रहसंकुलापि ज्योतिष्मती चन्द्रमसैव रात्रिः ॥ ६-२२

kāmam nṛpāḥ santu sahasraśo'nye rājanvatīmāhuranena bhūmim |
nakṣatratārāgrahasankulāpi jyotiṣmatī candramasaiva rātriḥ || 6-22

6-22. Though the earth has thousands of princes, yet it is this prince who has given glory to the earth and of whom the earth is proud because of his good rule and conduct, just like the case of the night sky that praises the moon for its beauty and radiance inspite of the fact there are countless other stars and constellations that dot the night sky, but none of them illuminates it like the moon does.

[Note--In this analogy, the prince of Magadha is compared to the moon, the rest of the kings and princes to the stars and constellations, and the earth to the night sky. Just like the case of the night sky which would remain dark if the moon was not there, so was the case with earth which will not have one good ruler of whom she (earth) would be proud if the prince of Magadha was not there.]

Verse no. 23:

क्रियाप्रबन्धादयमध्वराणामजस्रमाहूतसहस्रेनः।

शच्याश्चिरम् पाण्डुकपोललम्बान्मन्दारशून्यानलकांश्चकार ॥ ६-२३

kriyāprabandhādayamadhvarāṇāmajasramāhūtasahasranetraḥ|
śacyāściram pāṇḍukapolalambānmandāraśūnyānalakāmścakāra || 6-23

6-23. This prince of Magadha province had conducted many fire sacrifices in which he had invited Indra, the king of heaven, as a chief guest, the result of which was that Indra's consort Indrani missed her husband for long periods of time at a stretch during which there was no one to decorate or adorn her with earrings and pendants made of flowers of the Kalpa tree (the heavenly wish-fulfilling, evergreen tree). The consequence of Indrani's long separation from her husband Indra was that her cheeks looked pale and sunken, as well as bereft of any adornment because there was no one to adorn her with earrings and pendants in the absence of her husband.

[Note--Sunanda emphasised to princess Indumati the fact that the prince of Magadha was on friendly terms with Indra, the king of heaven. This privilege was not available to every king; only few selected great rulers could invite Indra to be their guest, with the confidence that the latter would surely come. Another crucial point was that this prince was a wealthy and religious man because he used to conduct regular fire sacrifices that entailed huge expenses.

Indra would stay at the prince's place for long periods of time, showing that they were very friendly. The fact that Indra was hosted for extended periods of time by the prince has been emphasised poetically by citing the example of Indra's consort, Indrani, whose cheeks would become pale and she would desist from adorning herself with flowers because she felt lonely, sad and forlorn due to the absence of her husband.]

Verse no. 24:

अनेन चेदिच्छसि गृह्यमाणम् पाणिम् वरेण्येन कुरु प्रवेशे|
प्रासादवातायनसंस्थितानाम् नेत्रोत्सवम् पुष्पपुराङ्गनानाम्॥ ६-२४

anena cedicchasi gr̥hyamāṇam pāṇim vareṇyena kuru praveśe|
prāsādavātāyanasamsthītānām netrotsavam puṣpapurāṅganānām || 6-24

6-24. If you decide to marry this most eligible suitor, then as you enter his capital city of Patliputra you would be able to grant exceptional joy to the women folk of the city who would be gazing at you longingly from their balconies, just like the case of bees hovering over a flower with their attention fixed on it, with a desire to get closer to its pollen."

[Note- Patliputra is an ancient name of the present-day city of Patna in Bihar state of India. As the marriage procession heads towards the royal palace, the ladies of Patliputra would crane their necks and peer through their windows and balconies, longing to meet you and interact with you, as you would be their queen.]

Verse no. 25:

एवम् तयोक्ते तमवेक्ष्य किञ्चिद्विसंसीदूर्वाङ्कमधूकमाला|
ऋजुप्रणामक्रिययैव तन्वी प्रत्यादिदेशैनमभाषमाणा॥ ६-२५

evam tayokte tamavekṣya kiñcidvisraṁsidūrvāṅkamadhūkamālā|
rjupraṇāmakriyayaiva tanvī pratyādideśainamabhāṣamāṇā || 6-25

6-25. When Sunanda finished her introductory narrative regarding the prince of Magadha, princess Indumati bowed politely before the prince, during which the garland of Mahua flowers, with the sacred grass known as Kush embedded in between the flowers, slightly shifted from her hands. But the princess decided not to put the garland on this prince, and so she moved on to the next competitor.

[Note--The botanical name of the tree which bears the Mahua flower is Madhuca longifolia. The flower is highly aromatic and sweet-scented, and the sap of this tree is used to make a traditional intoxicating drink that gives the same high as alcohol-based drinks.

For a fleeting moment when Indumati bowed before the prince of Magadha and the garland slightly shifted in her hands, there was high expectation in the crowd as well as in the mind of the prince himself that the princess was about to put the garland around the prince's neck. But like a deflated balloon, the prince became pale, sullen, crest-fallen and frustrated when soon thereafter, Indumati signalled to her chamberlain and trusted maid Sunanda to move on to the next candidate. The prince of Magadha appeared to have been hit by a boulder on his head or stricken by a thunderbolt; he lost his bearing and became dazed.]

Verse no. 26:

ताम् सैव वेत्रग्रहणे नियुक्ता राजान्तरम् राजसुताम् निनाय|
समीरणोत्थेव तरंगरेखा पद्मान्तरम् मानसराजहंसीम्॥ ६-२६

tām saiva vetragrahaṇe niyuktā rājāntaram rājasutām nināya|
samīraṇottheva taraṅgarekhā padmāntaram mānasarājahaṁsīm || 6-26

6-26. Just like the gust of wind helps a swan floating on the mansarovar lake to drift easily from one of the lake's lotus flower to another, so likewise the trusted maid Sunanda escorted princess Indumati away from the prince of Magadha to another candidate sitting in the line of suitors.

[Note--The 'mansarovar lake' is situated in the higher reaches of the Himalayas, in the southern neighbourhood of Mt. Kailash. Situated at a height of appx. 4590 meters, it is one of the world's highest fresh water lakes.]

Verse no. 27:

जगाद चैनामयमङ्गनाथः सुराङ्गनाप्रार्थितयौवनश्रीः।

विनीतनागः किल सूत्रकारैरैन्द्रम् पदम् भूमिगतोऽपि भुङ्क्ते॥ ६-२७

jagāda caināmayamaṅganāthaḥ surāṅganāprārthitayauvanaśrīḥ |
vinītanāgaḥ kila sūtrakārairaindrām padam bhūmigato'pi bhuṅkte || 6-27

6-27. When Sunanda, the princess' maid and custodian, and princess Indumati reached the prince of the kingdom known as Anga, Sunanda told Indumati: "This is the ruler of a great kingdom known as Anga. He is so youthful, charming and vivacious that even celestial damsels (known as Apsaras) yearn for him. His greatness and majesty can be judged from the fact that at his command are expert elephant-tamers, who have learnt the art of taming even the wildest of elephants by studying ancient texts and instruction manuals that describe how to achieve success in this profession, making them skilled elephant-tamers. These people have tamed countless giant elephants for this ruler of Anga who has a large herd of magnificent elephants under his command. {And these elephants are now part of his vast and invincible army.}

These things have made the prince of Anga acquire a stature and position on earth that are equivalent to, if not greater than, what Indra (the king of gods) possesses in heaven. Therefore, though this prince lives on earth, he enjoys all the comforts, pleasures, privileges and honours that Indra enjoys in heaven.

[Note—Indra, the king of gods in heaven, has only one giant elephant called 'Erawat' at his command. But this ruler of Anga kingdom has countless such elephants under his command. Obviously therefore, he is far more strong and important as compared to Indra. The number of elephants under a king's command is a measure of his power, strength, greatness and majesty. This prince's majesty and grandeur would put Indra to shame. To put it in a different way, this prince surpasses Indra, and for all practical purposes he is no less powerful and strong than Indra insofar as his influence and sway over earth is concerned.

When Indumati went around the pavilion, she was escorted by her chamberlain and trusted maid Sunanda who held a royal symbol in her hand, most probably a staff or a mace, but it could also have been a royal whisk that was waved before a queen or king, or any other senior member of the royal household when they stepped out in public. It was done to show honour and respect to the person, and to indicate that the concerned person was a senior member of the royal household.

The Anga kingdom was located in modern day eastern Bihar state and parts of west Bengal of India. Its primary seat was in the present day cities of Bhagalpur and Munger of Bihar. It too was one of the great sixteen Mahajanpads, or great sixteen empires of ancient India.]

Verse no. 28:

अनेन पर्यासयताश्रुबिन्दून्मुक्ताफलस्थूलतमान्स्तनेषु।

प्रत्यर्पिताः शत्रुविलासिनीनामुन्मुच्य सूत्रेण विनैव हाराः॥ ६-२८

anena paryāsayatāśrubindūnmuktāphalasthūlatamānstaneṣu |
pratyarpitāḥ śatruvilāsinīnāmumucya sūtreṇa vinaiva hārāḥ || 6-28

6-28. The queens of those kings whom this king of Anga had killed in battle had removed the garlands made of pearls from their necks and thrown them away in grief, but these pearls were replaced by the large tear drops falling from their eyes and rolling down their well-formed breasts, and while doing so these tear drops also appeared to be beads of pearls of the garlands that had swung around their breasts a little while earlier, albeit now in the form of loose pearls that scattered all around when the queens broke the garlands in anguish.

[Note--The queens of defeated and killed kings had torn their garlands made of pearl beads and thrown them away in grief. When they wore these garlands, the latter would lie on their breasts and swing leisurely when these ladies moved. But when their husbands died in the battle-field, these grief-stricken queens pulled the garlands, tore them apart, and threw them away in anguish. Then they wept bitterly, and the large tear drops rolled down their breasts like so many loose pearls cascading down their bosoms.

Princess Indumati instantly disliked this candidate as she determined he was cruel and merciless, with no compassion in his heart. How could she wed a prince who would not think twice before killing others and making their wives weep and lament in grief and dismay? It was out of the question.]

Verse no. 29:

निसर्गभिन्नास्पदमेकसंस्थमस्मिन्द्वयम् श्रीश्च सरस्वती च |
कान्त्या गिरा सूनृतया च योग्या त्वमेव कल्याणि तयोस्तृतीया॥ ६-२९

nisargabhinnāspadamekasaṁsthamasmindvayam śrīśca sarasvatī ca |
kāntyā girā sūnṛtayā ca योग्या त्वमेव कल्याणि तयोस्तृतीया || 6-29

6-29. Goddesses Laxmi and Saraswati (who are respectively the patron deities of wealth, prosperity, and knowledge, wisdom), who usually stay away from one another and don't prefer to patronise the same person simultaneously, have, however, chosen to stay together with this prince of Anga. In other words, this prince is wealthy and learned at the same time.

Therefore, oh lovely princess, you should marry this prince and stay with him as the third deity of beauty and grace.

[Note--According to ancient thoughts, material wealth and worldly riches, and wisdom and learning, including the knowledge of the scriptures which instils in a person the ability to distinguish what is worthy for the welfare of the soul, don't go together. If a person chooses to become rich, he would adopt all possible means, fair or foul, to achieve his objective whether by hook or by crook, and he would usually put all the rules of good and righteous conduct, all the rules of law, so to say, in the cupboard, lock then up, and forget all about them. On the other hand, a person who is genuinely learned and wise

would never adopt unfair means to attain quick riches. He would have understood that true happiness and contentedness do not come with huge piles of cash or gold or extravaganza, but with good virtues, excellence of character, and a humble way of life with few desires.

Lauding this prince's unique quality, Sunanda tells princess Indumati that this prince possesses both the goodness that comes with wisdom and learning, as well as wealth that comes with a prosperous and wealthy kingdom. So she urges Indumati to marry this prince and fill the only gap he has, i.e. absence of a deity representing beauty and grace, which gap Indumati would fill.]

Verse no. 30:

अथाङ्गराजदवतार्य चक्षुर्याहीति जन्यामवदत्कुमारी।

नासौ न काम्यो न च वेद सम्यग्द्रष्टुम् न सा भिन्नरुचिर्हि लोकः॥ ६-३०

athāṅgarājadavatārya cakṣuryāhīti janyāmavadatkumārī|

nāsau na kām्यo na ca veda samyagdraṣṭum na sā bhinnarucirhi lokah || 6-30

6-30. Princess Indumati lowered her eyes and looked away from the prince of Anga. She told Sunanda: "Move on to the next candidate."

It was not that the prince of Anga was not attractive or had worthy qualities, nor was it that Indumati had not seen him properly and heard all about him that Sunanda had told her. But everyone has different preferences and choices, and while one person may like someone, the other person may not, as different persons have different tastes and likings.

Verse no. 31:

ततः परम् दुःप्रसहम् द्विषद्भिर्नृपम् नियुक्ता प्रतिहारभूमौ।

निदर्शयामास विशेषदृश्यमिन्दुम् नवोत्थानमिवेन्दुमत्यै॥ ६-३१

tataḥ param duḥprasaham dviṣadbhirnṛpam niyuktā pratihārabhūmau |

nidarśayāmāsa viśeṣadr̥śyamindum navotthānamivendumatyai || 6-31

6-31. After that, Sunanda showed another prince to princess Indumati. This prince was hard on his enemies, had a very pleasant personality, was young, and was as charming as a newly risen full moon.

Verse no. 32:

अवन्तिनाथोऽयमुग्रबाहुर्विशालवक्षास्तनुवृत्तमध्यः।

आरोप्य चक्रभ्रममुष्णतेजास्त्वष्ट्रेव यत्नोल्लिखितो विभाति॥ ६-३२

avantinātho'yamugrabāhurviśālavakṣāstanuvṛttamadhyah|
āropya cakrabhramamuṣṇatejāstvaṣṭreva yatnollikhito vibhāti || 6-32

6-32. Sunanda told Indumati: "This prince has long arms, broad chest and well-built muscular waist, and with his radiant personality he shines forth like a sun. He is the ruler of the realm of Avanti. It appears that Vishwakarma, the heavenly architect and builder who designed the world, had carved him very carefully on his lathe machine so that his shine could vie with the shine of the sun's disc which was also cut and trimmed by Vishwakarma.

[Note--The kingdom of Avanti was a powerful kingdom of ancient India that was located in modern day Malwa region of the state of Madhya Pradesh. Its capital was Ujjain. It was one of the sixteen Mahajanpads, or great empires of ancient India.]

Verse no. 33:

अस्य प्रयाणेषु समग्रशक्तेरग्रेसरैर्वाजिभिरुत्थितानि|
कुर्वन्ति सामन्तशिखामणीनाम् प्रभाप्ररोहास्तमयम् रजांसि॥ ६-३३

asya prayāṇeṣu samagraśakteragresarairvājibhirutthitāni|
kurvanti sāmantaśikhāmaṇīnām prabhāprarohāstamayam rajāṁsi || 6-33

6-33. This prince has all kinds of strengths and powers vested in him. When he goes out on a military campaign of conquest that is known as 'Digvijaya', then the dust raised by the hooves of the horses in his cavalry rises in huge clouds and settles on the crowns of all his opponent rulers or feudal lords, making their crowns lose their shine.

[Note--The crowns of feudal rulers losing their shine implies that the fame and glory of all of them faded away in front of this prince of Avanti. These rulers bowed before him and accepted his lordship.

The 'Digvijaya' was a military campaign undertaken periodically by great kings or emperors in ancient times in India. This general practice of those times had two main objectives. One was to enforce and reiterate the authority of the emperor or a senior king over the entire area of land under his domain so that vassal and subordinate states, the local fiefdoms and chieftains or lords, could be kept under leash and ensure that they continue with their allegiance to the crown.

The other objective was also an important factor, which was to acquire more territory and expand the jurisdiction of the kingdom / empire. In this process, new alliances with other kingdoms were established, which helped in terms of military strength, trade, commerce, and cultural citizen-to-citizen exchanges.

The term 'Digvijaya' means a great victory campaign. An example of a detailed narration of one such campaign is found in Kalidas' classic 'Raghuvansham' where we read how king Raghu launched and succeeded in one such round of military campaign when he brought all the four directions of the Indian sub-continent under his command. {Refer: Raghuvansham, Canto 4.}}

Verse no. 34:

असौ महाकालनिकेतनस्य वसन्नदूरे किल चन्द्रमौलेः।
तमिस्रपक्षेऽपि सहप्रियाभिर्ज्योत्स्नावतो निर्विशति प्रदोषान्॥ ६-३४

asau mahākālaniketanasya vasannadūre kila candramauleḥ|
tamisrapakṣe'pi sahapriyābhirjyotsnāvato nirviśati pradoṣān || 6-34

6-34. The palace of this prince is situated near the great temple of Mahakaal (a form of Lord Shiva) who bears the moon on his head. That is why even during the waning phase of the moon when the moon's natural light goes on fading gradually, this prince continues to enjoy the pleasure of constant moonlight because of the moon present on the head of this deity.

[Note--The Mahakaal temple is located in Ujjain. This verse unequivocally establishes the fact that this prince had his capital in the ancient city of Ujjain. Further, unlike today's era when such symbols of celestial significance as the moon being embedded in the long locks of Shiva's hairs has been turned into mere paintings or designs on an idol, in ancient times priceless crystals, diamonds, and other kinds of gemstones that had natural light emanating from them were used to craft such symbols. Hence, when night fell, the moon on the head of the idol of the deity Mahakaal glowed with the same white light as the moon in the sky because of the many oil lamps that burnt around it, just like the case of a crystal ball shining in the dark when light falls on it from various angles.]

Verse no. 35:

अनेन यूना सह पार्थिवेन रम्भोरु कच्चिन्मनसो रुचिस्ते।
सिप्रातरंगानिलकम्पितासु विहर्तुमुद्यानपरंपरासु॥ ६-३५

anena yūnā saha pāarthivena rambhoru kaccinmanaso ruciste|
siprātaraṁgānilakampitāsu vihartumudyānaparaṁparāsu || 6-35

6-35. Oh princess Indumati who has thighs that rival in beauty and form to those of Rambha, the queen of Apsaras, the damsels of heaven (rambhoru)! Do you wish to play sport with this youthful prince in the many royal gardens of Ujjain where a soft breeze fanned by the waves of the Shipra river wafts in continuously?"

[Note--The Shipra river of Ujjain is revered in Hinduism, and the famous Kumbha festival is held on its banks.]

Verse no. 36:

तस्मिन्नभिद्योतितबन्धुपद्मे प्रतापसंशोषितशत्रुपङ्के|

बबन्ध सा नोत्तमसौकुमार्या कुमुद्वती भानुमतीव भावम्॥ ६-३६

tasminnabhidhyotitabandhupadme pratāpasamśoṣitaśatrupaṅke|

babandha sā nottamasaukumāryā kumudvatī bhānumatīva bhāvam || 6-36

6-36. To the pretty princess Indumati, this prince, who could with equal ease make his friends happy on the one hand, and kill his enemies on the other hand, did not seem worthy to be married, just like the case of the water lily that does not like the sun inspite of the sun's ability to make the lotus flower open its petals and bloom, and at the same time dry up water from slush found in wetlands.

[Note--The soft and tender lily flower likes the cool and soothing light of the moon, and abhors the strong and harsh light of the sun, inspite of the fact that the light of the sun is manifold times more strong, brilliant and illuminating than that of the moon. Here, the prince is compared to the sun, his friends to the lotus flowers, and his enemies to the slush. Like the lotus flower expresses its happiness when it sees the sun by opening its petals during the daytime, the friends of this prince too felt happy in his company. Similarly, like the sun dries up the water from muddy waters of the wetlands, the prince makes his enemies lose their identity by either ruthlessly vanquishing them or slaying them outright. The sun's heat and its cruelty in drying up water does not find favour with the water lily, so it closes its petals at sunrise, almost at the same time as the lotus opening its own petals.

As has been pointed out in verse no. 30 herein above, everyone has his or her own individual likings and preferences, and to turn down an offer does not mean that the offer was bad. So likewise, this prince, inspite of his glories, was not to Indumati's liking, so she signalled Sunanda to move on to the next candidate.]

Verse no. 37:

तामग्रतस्तामरसान्तराभामनूपराजस्य गुणैरनूनाम्|

विधाय सृष्टिम् ललिताम् विधातुर्जगाद भूयः सुदतीम् सुनन्दा॥ ६-३७

tāmagratastāmarasāntarābhāmanūparājasya guṇairanūnām|

vidhāya sṛṣṭim lalitām vidhāturjagāda bhūyaḥ sudatīm sunandā || 6-37

6-37. Sunanda escorted princess Indumati-- whose beauty and radiance rivalled that of the lotus flower, who had all the good characters and qualities in her, was a sterling example of the creator Brahma's skill in craftsmanship, and who had beautiful teeth-- to the next competitor, the prince of the kingdom of Anup. When the duo reached there, Sunanda once again outlined the qualities and achievements of this prince before Indumati as follows--

[Note--The ancient kingdom of Anup was in a region of central India, corresponding roughly to the state of Madhya Pradesh. It was situated in the Narmada river valley, roughly in the area known as the plateau of Vindhya range of mountains, and its capital city was Mahishmati.]

Verse no. 38:

सङ्ग्रामनिर्विष्टसहस्रबाहुरष्टादशद्वीपनिखातयूपः।

अनन्यसाधारणराजशब्दो बभूव योगी किल कार्तवीर्यः॥ ६-३८

saṅgrāmanirviṣṭasahasrabāhuraṣṭādaśadvīpanikhātayūpaḥ|

ananyasādhāraṇarājaśabdo babhūva yogī kila kārtavīryaḥ || 6-38

6-38. Sunanda told Indumati: "In some ancient time in the past, there was a king named Kaarta-virya (kārtavīrya). He was a great ascetic-king, and because of the mystical powers that he possessed, a thousand arms miraculously sprang on his body when he engaged in a battle. He went around the world and erected pillars on eighteen islands to mark the Vedic rituals he performed in each of these places. He was so invincible, so powerful and so strong that no ruler of the time could match him, and none would dare to call himself a king when faced by him.

[Note--The other name of this famous king was Kartivirya Arjun, or Sahastra-Bahu Arjun because of his thousand (sahastra = 1000) arms (bahu). He ruled from his capital city of Mahishmati. He was a devotee of sage Dattatreya.]

Verse no. 39:

अकार्यचिन्ता समकालमेव प्रादुर्भवश्चापधरः पुरस्तात्।

अन्तःशरीरेष्वपि यः प्रजानाम् प्रत्यादिदेशाविनयम् विनेता॥ ६-३९

akāryacintā samakārameva prādurbhavaṁścāpadharaḥ purastāt|

antaḥśarīreṣvapi yaḥ prajānām pratyādideśāvinayam vinetā || 6-39

6-39. He was such a righteous and spiritually acclaimed king that during his reign if any of his subjects even thought of doing anything wrong, then he would immediately have a feeling that the king has appeared before him with a bow and arrow in his hands to punish him for his misdeeds in case that person went ahead to actually give shape to the wrong thoughts in his mind. That is the reason why none of his subjects ever dared to do anything wrong.

Verse no. 40:

ज्याबन्धनिष्पन्दभुजेन यस्य विनिःश्वसद्वक्त्रपरंपरेण।
कारागृहे निर्जितवासवेन लङ्केश्वरेणोषितमा प्रसादात्॥ ६-४०

jjābandhaniṣpandabhujena yasya viniḥśvasadvaktraparampareṇa |
kāragrhe nirjitavāsavena laṅkeśvareṇoṣitamā prasādāt || 6-40

6-40. King Sahastrabahu was so formidable and powerful that once he had even kept Ravana, the virtually invincible king of Lanka and the demon race who had earlier vanquished Indra, the king of heaven, in his prison as a captive by tying Ravana's limbs with the string of his bow, and kept the latter in this miserable position till Sahastrabahu became satisfied and released him from his captivity.

[Note--The story of Sahastrabahu capturing Ravana and putting the latter into prison, and later on released when the king became satisfied, is briefly as follows: Once Ravana set out on a mission of conquering the world, and in this process he invaded the kingdom of Sahastrabahu and insulted the latter in front of his women while the king was enjoying some sport on the banks of river Narmada. This happened because Sahastrabahu blocked the flow of the river by his thousand arms, which effectively blocked the progress of Ravana's armada. In the ensuing battle, Sahastrabahu easily defeated Ravana and dragged the latter to his prison by tying him to his chariot. While in the prison, Sahastrabahu tied the limbs of Ravana with the strings of his bow, and kept him like a caged animal. Finally, upon sage Pulastya's intervention, who was the grandfather of Ravana, the king released his captive.

This was the same Ravana who was later slayed by Lord Ram as narrated in the epic story famous as the Ramayana.

A reference to this incident was made by Angad, Lord Ram's emissary to Ravana because the Lord wanted to make peace with the demon king, and avoid a ferocious and destructive war, when Angad was engaged in a hot verbal spat with the Ravana--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand (canto 6), Chaupai line nos. 15-16 that precede Doha no. 24.]

Verse no. 41:

तस्यान्वये भूपतिरेष जातः प्रतीप इत्यागमवृद्धसेवी।
येनः श्रियः संश्रयदोषरूढम् स्वभावलोलेत्ययशम् प्रमृष्टम्॥ ६-४१

tasyānvaye bhūpatireṣa jātaḥ pratīpa ityāgamavṛddhasevī |
yenaḥ śriyaḥ saṁśrayadoṣarūḍham svabhāvaloletyayaśam pramṛṣṭam || 6-41

6-41. Sunanda continued: "This prince is born in the lineage of the same famous king Sahastrabahu. His name is Prateep, and he does a lot of service to elders in general, and to those who are learned in the Vedas (i.e. the scriptures) particularly. He has literally washed-off the general accusation levelled on goddess Laxmi (the deity of wealth) that she does not stay permanently at one place under the patronage of a single person, but

keeps on changing hands from one patron to another. To wit, this prince is so great that Laxmi has decided to stay with him permanently, which implies that he is wealthy and his kingdom is prosperous.

The fact of the matter is that goddess Laxmi prefers to leave a patron and move on to another because she does not want to stay with someone whose character is tainted, who has bad habits, and who does not follow the principles of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, propriety, probity, ethics, goodness of thought and conduct etc.). But since Prateep has an excellent and flawless character, has no bad habit, and is also an ardent follower of the principles of Dharma, goddess Laxmi stays with him in a perpetual manner.

Verse no. 42:

आयोधने कृष्णगतिम् सहायमवाप्य यः क्षत्रियकालरात्रिम्
धाराम् शिताम् रामपरश्वधस्य संभावयत्युत्पलपत्रसाराम्॥ ६-४२

āyodhane kṛṣṇagatim sahāyamavāpya yaḥ kṣatriyakālarātrim|
dhārām śītām rāmaparaśvadhasya sambhāvayatyutpalapatrasārām || 6-42

6-42. Sunanda told princess Indumati: "To give you an idea of this prince's bravery, strength and prowess, let me inform you that he treats the sharp-edged battle-axe of sage Parashuram-- which is injected with the heat of the fire because the sage had pleased the Fire-God who granted the sage the boon that his axe would bear the same heat as live fire, and with which he had conquered the Kshatriya kings twenty-one times in battles-- as if it was merely a cool petal of the lotus flower.

[Note--Sunanda cited this ability of the prince because it was not a joke to stand against the wrath of sage Parashuram, especially against the sage's sharp-edged battle-axe which would be red hot during battles. But Prateep had the might to neutralise the axe and handled it so easily as if it was not a fiery weapon that would scorch, but was as cool and soft as the petal of a lotus flower.]

Verse no. 43:

अस्याङ्कलक्ष्मीर्भव दीर्घबाहोर्माहिष्मतीवप्रनितम्बकाञ्चीम्
प्रासादजालैर्जलवेणिरम्याम् रेवाम् यदि प्रेक्षितुमस्ति कामः॥ ६-४३

asyāṅkalakṣmīrbhava dīrghabāhormāhiṣmatīvapranitambakāñcīm|
prāsādajalairjalavenīramyām revām yadi prekṣitumasti kāmah || 6-43

6-43. So therefore, if you wish to enjoy viewing the charming sights of river Narmada from the windows of the palaces of the city of Mahismati which has tall buildings, is surrounded by the walls of a fort with wide ramparts, and which has river Narmada draped around it like a garland worn by a voluptuous maiden--then, you must wed this

strong, valiant, invincible and brave prince with powerful arms (which are as strong as his famous ancestor named king Sahastrabahu).

Verse no. 44:

तस्याः प्रकामम् प्रियदर्शनोऽपि न स क्षितीशो रुचये बभूव।
शरत्प्रमृष्टाम्बुधरोपरोधः शशीव पर्याप्तकलो नलिन्याः॥ ६-४४

tasyāḥ prakāmam priyadarśano'pi na sa kṣitīśo rucaye babhūva |
śaratpramṛṣṭāmbudharoparodhaḥ śaśīva paryāptakalo nalinyāḥ || 6-44

6-44. Just like a waxing moon, with its pleasing moonlight, that shines so beautifully in a cloud-less clear sky of autumn does not seem to be attractive to a lotus flower (which instead prefers the bright sun and its hot rays during the day time), so was the case with this prince who, though he was handsome and possessed all the good qualities, did not enthuse princess Indumati, for she did not like him.

Verse no. 45:

सा शूरसेनाधिपतिम् सुषेणमुद्दिश्य लोकान्तरगीतकीर्तिम्।
आचारशुद्धोभयवंशदीपम् शुद्धान्तरक्ष्या जगदे कुमारी॥ ६-४५

sā śūrasenādhipatim suṣeṇamuddiśya lokāntaragītakīrtim |
ācāraśuddhobhayavaṁśadīpam śuddhāntarakṣyā jagade kumārī || 6-45

6-45. After that, Sunanda, the trusted maid and custodian of princess Indumati, politely escorted her to the next candidate, the prince of Mathura, named Sushen. Introducing the prince, Sunanda told Indumati: "The glories of this prince are so well known and great that they are eulogised even in the heaven. To wit, even gods and others residing in heaven laud this prince, and praise him for his remarkable qualities. By his good character and achievements, he had brought fame and honour to the families of both his parents, i.e. to the paternal and maternal dynasties.

[Note--Mathura is a famous district in northern India, and is situated in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is famously associated with Lord Krishna, and is situated along the banks of river Yamuna. It was a major hub for trade, learning and art during ancient times, and the capital city of the Sursena or Sushen dynasty.]

Verse no. 46:

नीपान्वयः पार्थिव एष यज्वा गुणैर्यमाश्रित्य परस्परेण।
सिद्धाश्रमम् शान्तमिवेत्य सत्त्वैर्नैसर्गिकोऽप्युत्सृजे विरोधः॥ ६-४६

nīpānvayaḥ pāṛthiva eṣa yajvā guṇairyamāśritya paraspāreṇa|
siddhāśramam śāntamivetya sattvairnaisargiko'pyutsasrje virodhaḥ || 6-46

6-46. This prince performs Vedic rituals in a systematic way. He is born in the lineage of king Nipa (nīpānvayaḥ). All the different qualities, no matter how variant and at odds with each other they may be, co-exist in this prince just like the case of hermitages of great sages where peace and tranquillity reign supreme so much so that animals of all types forget their mutual disagreements and antagonist nature to come and live together harmoniously.

[Note--In the hermitages of sages, the spiritual environment of peace, tranquillity, equality and friendship is so powerful and all-pervasive that all kinds of animals come there to live side-by-side peacefully, abandoning their natural antagonism with each other. Thus, an animal that is a hunter by its natural instinct lives alongside its natural prey in perfect harmony as if they both were brother animals.

Similarly, qualities that may seem at odds with each other co-exist comfortably in this prince. For instance, selfishness and charitable nature, greed and magnanimity, cruelty and mercy, anger and calmness, intolerance and forgiveness, et al, which are generally regarded as incompatible with each other, are seamlessly present in this prince. For example, he may be angry and agitated with someone in one moment, and in the other moment he would look calm and serene.]

Verse no. 47:

यस्यात्मगेहे नयनाभिरामा कान्तिर्हिमांशोरिव संनिविष्टा|
हर्म्याग्रसंरूढतृणाङ्कुरेषु तेजोऽविषह्यम् रिपुमन्दिरेषु॥ ६-४७

yasyātmagehe nayanābhirāmā kāntirhimāṁśoriva saṁniviṣṭā|
harmyāgrasamrūḍhatṛṇāṅkureṣu tejo'viṣahyam ripumandireṣu || 6-47

6-47. On the one hand, the pleasant and comforting glances of this prince are like the soothing light of the moon which sends cheer to all those present in his royal household, while on the other hand his fiery gaze, that looks like the scorching rays of the sun, are able to destroy his enemies and reduce their palaces into decaying structures on which wild grass grows.

[Note--In the previous verse no. 46, Sunanda had told Indumati that qualities of opposite nature co-exist in this prince. Now in this verse she gives an example of his friendly and comforting nature on the one hand, and his wrathfulness and stern behaviour towards his adversaries on the other hand.]

Verse no. 48:

यस्यावरोधस्तनचन्दनानाम् प्रक्षालनाद्वारिविहारकाले
कलिन्दकन्या मथुराम् गतापि गङ्गोर्मिसंस्कृतजलेव भाति॥ ६-४८

yasyāvarodhastanacandanānām prakṣālanādvārivihārakāle |
kalindakanyā mathurām gatāpi gaṅgormisaṁsaktajaleva bhāti || 6-48

6-48. At the time when he participates in water sport in river Yamuna at Mathura with the ladies of his palace, the paste of sandalwood that has been smeared on the breasts of these ladies get washed in the dark water of the river, thereby rendering the water of Yamuna with a slightly light colour, making it appear that river Yamuna has merged with river Ganges (which has water with a lighter shade) in Mathura itself (instead of at Prayag where the two rivers naturally merge with each other).

[Note--In all probability, this particular habit of the prince may have not gone down well with Indumati, as it implied that the prince liked company of young ladies, and enjoyed frolicking around with them in the naked and in the open as is evident with his playing sport with them in river Yamuna where the paste of sandalwood smeared on the breasts of these ladies got washed off in the river. There surely must have been a large harem that he maintained, as the change of colour of the water of river Yamuna can only happen when the paste of sandalwood is dissolved in large amounts in the water, which means that the prince was accompanied by a large number of women while he played sport with them in the river. This cast a shadow on the character and chastity and modesty of the prince. Obviously, Indumati would not like to have a prince as her husband who keeps a large number of women in his harem. It shows he had a promiscuous and sexual nature, and was inclined to enjoying sensual pleasures, rather than practicing self-restraint and sexual discipline. Indumati feared that she would eventually be treated as one other woman in the teeming harem! So, she was immediately put-off and disliked this candidate.]

Verse no. 49:

त्रस्तेन तार्क्ष्यात्किल कालियेन मणिम् विसृष्टम् यमुनौकसा यः
वक्षःस्थलव्यापिरुचम् दधानः सकौस्तुभम् ह्रेपयतीव कृष्णम्॥ ६-४९

trastena tārksyātkila kāliyena maṇim visṛṣṭam yamunaukasā yaḥ |
vakṣaḥsthalavyāpirucam dadhānaḥ sakaustubham hrepayatīva kṛṣṇam || 6-49

6-49. The huge black sea-serpent named Kaliyanaag¹, who lives underwater in river Yamuna as he is so scared of Garud (the celestial eagle who is an eternal enemy of serpents, and who is also a mount of Lord Vishnu) that he never dares to show his hoods on the surface of the water, was so pleased by this prince when the latter granted him immunity from any harm from his enemies that he gifted the prince a glittering gem known as Mani, which the serpent bore on his hood. The prince wears that gem as a

pendant on his chest, and the dazzle of it is so brilliant that it outshines a similar gem, known as Kaustav Mani², that Lord Vishnu wears on his own chest.

[Note--¹The Kaliyanaag is also associated with the legend of Lord Krishna who was born in the third era known as Dwapar Yuga. It is believed that the water of river Yamuna is dark in colour because of this huge black sea-serpent and its breath that turns the water black. The word 'Kaliyanaag' itself means a black serpent (Kali = black; Naag = serpent).

The Kaliyanaag was one of the countless serpent-sons of sage Kashyap and his wife Kadru. Hence, he belonged to the Naag (celestial serpent) lineage. Originally, he lived in the island known as 'Ramanak', but fled to river Yamuna when the celestial eagle Garud attacked him. It was a safe haven because Garud was barred from entering this area due to the curse of an ascetic named Saubhari.

There are some special categories of serpents who secrete a thick sap-like effervescent liquid from the glands on their hoods. This viscous secretion has certain fluorescent chemicals, primarily phosphorous, but also including antimony, europium, terbium, and traces of mercury, which emanate a natural light when they come in contact with ultra-violet light. The secretion gradually hardens and forms a gem-like structure on the hood of the serpent. It is so rare that this crystallised secretion of the serpent's glands is prized as a priceless gem, much like pearls, corals, diamonds and other such gems which are found in Nature.

²The Kaustav Mani (gem) that Lord Vishnu wears as a pendant on his chest is also a product of Nature, being discovered at the time of the churning of the celestial ocean by the gods and the demons. The word 'kaustav' means the gift of the ocean.]

Verse no. 50:

संभाव्य भर्तारममुम् युवानम् मृदुप्रवालोत्तरपुष्पशय्ये
वृन्दावने चैत्ररथादनूने निर्विशयताम् सुन्दरि यौवनश्रीः॥ ६-५०

sambhāvya bhartāramamum yuvānam mṛdupravālottarapuṣpaśayye|
vṛndāvane caitrarathādanūne nirviśyatām sundari yauvanaśrīḥ || 6-50

6-50. Oh fair princess Indumati (sundari)! By marrying this handsome young prince you would be able to enjoy the various pleasures that are derived in the many royal gardens with their pavilions and play-houses of this prince in Vrindavan (a suburb of Mathura), sporting places of pleasure and enjoyment with their flower beds, tender leaves and fragrant flowers, which are more beautiful and captivating than their counterparts in heaven that belong to Kuber (the treasurer of heaven) named Chaitra-rath.

Verse no. 51:

अध्यास्य चाम्भःपृषतोक्षितानि शैलेयगन्धीनि शिलातलानि।
कलापिनाम् प्रावृषि पश्य नृत्यम् कान्तासु गोवर्धनकन्दरासु॥ ६-५१

adhyāsya cāmbhaḥpṛṣatokṣitāni śaileyagandhīni śilātalāni |
kalāpinām prāvṛṣi paśya nṛtyam kāntāsu govardhanakandarāsu || 6-51

6-51. Further, you may enjoy the sight of dancing peacocks in the beautiful valleys, alcoves and caves (kandarā) surrounding Mt. Govardhana¹ where, during the rainy seasons, rain-water is sprayed all around. For enjoying this charming scenery, you can sit on one of the many stone slabs that dot the place; these slabs emanate a pleasant fragrance resembling the scent of the legendary stone called ‘Shilajeet’² when rain-drops wet them."

[Note—¹Govardhana is the hill around which Lord Krishna had played with the Gopis (young girls of the region), and he had once lifted it on his little finger to save the local population from drowning during a heavy downpour that caused a deluge.

²The ‘Shilajeet’ is a rock-stone formed by a combination of about 40 inorganic minerals, is blackish-brown in colour, and emanates a pleasant fragrance when wetted with water. It is also known as Mumiyo or Mumie. It is found in the Himalyan mountain range, and is used in traditional Indian medicine as a warm and rejuvenating substance in a powered form. Its main medicinal benefit is its use as dietary supplement to help in cognition functions, and probably treating Alzheimer’s disease. It has anti-inflammatory and immunity modulating functions, and is generally used for male infertility, muscle strength, athletic performances and bone diseases.]

Verse no. 52:

नृपम् तमावर्तमनोज्ञाभिः सा व्यत्यगादन्यवधूर्भवित्री।
महीधरम् मार्गवशादुपेतम् स्रोतोवहा सागरगामिनीव॥ ६-५२

nṛpam tamāvartamanojñābhiḥ sā vyatyagādanyavadhūrbhavitṛī |
mahīdharam mārgavaśādupetam srotovahā sāgaragāminīva || 6-52

6-52. Princess Indumati, who was so handsome that her navel resembled a deep whirlpool, and who was destined to become a bride of some other prince, politely moved away from prince Sushen to the next competitor as a river wends its way around the many hills and mountains that it finds on its way to meet the ocean.

[Note--In this analogy, princess Indumati is likened to a river, and the various princes are compared to the hills and mountains depending on their individual stature and standing in the hierarchy of kings and princes. A river winds its way past all such obstructions and heads straight to the ocean, which in this analogy would be the prince she finally selects

to marry. Thus, Indumati neglected all other suitors she met and headed to the one who was destined to be her groom.

The poet Kalidas belonged to that genre of poets who relished describing the beauty of the feminine form by citing examples from Nature to drive home their point of view. One such example is found in this verse when Indumati's navel is compared to a whirlpool or eddy of currents in the water of a river. This analogy is very apt in the context of what is said next when Indumati is likened to a 'river' that wends its way past hills and mountains to reach its final destination in the ocean.

This analogy of the river proceeding straight to the ocean by by-passing all that falls on its way also has a subtle hint--and it is that Indumati had decided before-hand whom to marry. In all probability, her brother, king Bhoj of Vidharva who was organising this marriage ceremony for her, had taken her into confidence and had already told her that he would like her to wed Aja, the prince of Ayodhya. It has already been pointed out earlier during the course of our narration that king Bhoj had rolled out a red carpet for prince Aja, right from the start of the latter's journey to attend the ceremony, to the minutest details of hosting him and providing all hospitality to him. He had even arranged a special peacock-like throne for the prince, which distinguished Aja from all other princes who had assembled there in strength. So therefore, when Indumati asked her brother as to how she would find prince Aja in the line-up of great princes, who would all be looking equally charming at the venue, king Bhoj told her about some distinguishing marks to spot prince Aja. To remove all confusions, her chamberlain and aide Sunanda quietly pointed prince Aja to her at the time when they were standing on the central platform prior to making their round around the rows of assembled princes.]

Verse no. 53:

अथाङ्गदालिष्टभुजम् भुजिष्या हेमाङ्गदम् नाम कलिङ्गनाथम् |
आसेदुषीम् सादितशत्रुपक्षम् बालामबालेन्दुमुखीम् बभाषे ॥ ६-५३

athāṅgadāliṣṭabhujam bhujiṣyā hemāṅgadam nāma kaliṅganātham |
āseduṣīm sāditaśatrupakṣam bālāmabālendumukhīm babhāṣe || 6-53

6-53. After that, the trusted maid Sunanda escorted princess Indumati, whose face was as beautiful as a full moon, to the next competitor, the ruler of Kalinga. His name was Hemaangad (hemāṅgadam). He wore an excellent ornament commonly known as Vijaayat (symbolising his various victories) on his muscular biceps, and who was an expert in vanquishing his enemies.

Verse no. 54:

असौ महेन्द्रादिसमानसारः पतिर्महेन्द्रस्य महोदधेश्च |
यस्य क्षरत्सैन्यगजच्छलेन यात्रासु यातीव पुरो महेन्द्रः ॥ ६-५४

asau mahendrādisamānasāraḥ patirmahendrasya mahodadheśca |
yasya kṣaratsainyagajacchalena yātrāsu yāṭiva puro mahendraḥ || 6-54

6-54. Sunanda told Indumati: "This prince is as invincible and insurmountable as is Mount Mahendra¹, and his authority and sway covers this mountain as well as the ocean bordering his kingdom (i.e. the land between the two). When he embarks on a military expedition, then the majestic and powerful elephants of his army that lead from the front appear to be personified forms of Mt. Mahendra itself. These elephants were invigorated by the scent of the ichor emanating from their temples, and spearheaded the assault on the enemy².

[Note--¹Mt. Mahendra is situated in the Gajapati district of the state of Oddisa along the eastern seaboard of India, and lies along the boarder of the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh. The ocean here refers to the Bay of Bengal or the eastern ocean along which lies the eastern coastal states of Oddisa (pronounced also as Oddisha) and Andhra Pradesh in India. This verse implies that the prince of Kalinga rules over the land falling between Mt. Mahendra and the Bay of Bengal on the eastern seaboard of India.

²The district where this mountain is situated is called 'Gajapati', drawing from the words 'gaja' meaning an elephant, and 'pati' meaning a lord--i.e. the land whose ruler is a lord of an army consisting of elephants. The king of Kalinga had a large number of strong, powerful and muscular male elephants as a major constituent of his army, and in an assault on an enemy, these elephants became the front-line and the bulwark of the attack to help the other components, such as the infantry and the artillery, to remain safe in the initial wave of the attack, and then complete the process in the second and follow-up phase. When it came to breaking the gates of forts, trampling upon and battering the enemy's infantry and scattering its cavalry, or breaking through the enemy's ranks like a powerful moving wall bulldozing through, there was nothing better than elephants.

Horses were surely agile and swift, but they did not have the muscular punch and thrust, as well as the benefit of physical height that elephants possessed by their very nature and build.]

Verse no. 55:

ज्याघातरेखे सुभुजो भुजाभ्याम् बिभर्ति यश्चापभृताम् पुरोगः |
रिपुश्रियाम् साञ्जनबाष्पसेके बन्दीकृतानामिव पद्धती द्वे॥ ६-५५

jyāghātarekhe subhujo bhujābhyām bibharti yaścāpabhṛtām purogaḥ |
ripuśriyām sāñjanabāṣpaseke bandīkṛtānāmiva paddhatī dve || 6-55

6-55. This glorious prince named Hemaangad has magnificent (i.e. strong and muscular) arms, and he is an ace archer. He has got two dark lines etched on his palms which are the result of continuous pulling of the string of his bow, and they are like two roads that have been paved and washed using the tears mixed by the dark eye-ointment of the ladies

of his defeated enemies so that the deities of their respective kingdoms could come along these paths and take up fresh residence in the kingdom of prince Hemaangad.

[Note--Though this means that prince Hemaangad was very brave and valiant as he would invariably defeat his enemies, but it did not go down well with Indumati who would not like someone as her husband who took pride in slaying his enemies and making their women-folk weep in grief. Bravery and conquest in battle during which the enemy is mercilessly killed, without giving the latter a chance to surrender, is one thing, and showing mercy and grace upon one's adversary, and sparing his life after his defeat, is another thing. So instinctively, Indumati decided this prince was not to her liking.]

Verse no. 56:

यमात्मनः सन्ननि संनिकृष्टो मन्द्रध्वनित्याजितयामतूर्यः।
प्रासादवातायनदृश्यवीचिः प्रबोधयत्यर्णव एव सुप्तम्॥ ६-५६

yamātmanah sadmani sannnikṛṣṭo mandradhvanityājitayāmatūryah |
prāsādavātāyanadr̥śyavīciḥ prabodhayatyarnava eva suptam || 6-56

6-56. Right in front of his royal palace is the ocean, whose waves are clearly visible from the balconies and windows of the royal mansion. When this prince sleeps in his palace, the roar and rumble of the mighty ocean wakes him up naturally in the fourth quarter of the night (i.e. in the early hours of the morning) as it's so loud that its sound dims the music of the royal band that too plays at the same time with the same intention--to wake up the prince.

Verse no. 57:

अनेन सार्धम् विहराम्बुराशेस्तीरेषु तालीवनमर्मरेषु।
द्वीपान्तरानीतलवङ्गपुष्पैरपाकृतस्वेदलवा मरुद्भिः॥ ६-५७

anena sārddham viharāmburāśestīreṣu tālīvanamarmareṣu |
dvīpāntarānītalavaṅgapuṣṭpairapākṛtasvedalavā marudbhiḥ || 6-57

6-57. If you wish to enjoy walking leisurely along the sandy beaches of the ocean where the coconut trees emanate a soft murmur when they sway in the soft breeze that continuously wafts inland from the ocean, then you should marry this prince of Kalinga. The sweat of those who play sport on the beach are swept dry by the breeze laden with the fragrance of clove flowers that blows in from the nearby islands."

[Note--Cloves are found in abundance in the Andaman and Nicobar islands situated in the Bay of Bengal near the east coast of India, across from the coastal land where the kingdom of Kalinga was situated. What is remarkable and noteworthy here is that the ancient poet Kalidas had such mastery over geography, particularly phyto-geography

which deals with the distribution of different species of plants in different geographical areas, that he knew exactly what kind of smell or fragrance the wind will have when it blows on the beach of Kalinga from across the ocean. Since cloves are found in Andaman and Nicobar islands, which are the nearest islands to the eastern seaboard of the Indian peninsula where our present kingdom of Kalinga was situated, the poet specifically mentions 'fragrance of the clove flower' instead of mentioning any other flower at random!]

Verse no. 58:

प्रलोभिताप्याकृतिलोभनीया विदर्भराजावरजा तयैवम्
तस्मादपावर्तत दूरकृष्टा नीत्येव लक्ष्मीः प्रतिकूलदैवात्॥ ६-५८

pralobhitāpyākṛtilobhaniyā vidarbharājāvarajā tayaivam|
tasmādapāvartata dūrakṛṣṭā nītyeva lakṣmīḥ pratikūladaivāt || 6-58

6-58. Princess Indumati, who was expected to be enthused by the physical charms of the competitors as well as by their qualities as briefly outlined by her companion-maid Sunanda, showed no interest in the prince of Kalinga, and turned away from him nonchalantly and moved ahead, just like the case of the deity of good fortune that shuns a person with a doomed fate and turns away from him.

[Note--In this simile, Indumati is the deity of good fortune, while the prince of Kalinga is like the person with a doomed fate. His fate is regarded as being doomed because Indumati did not think him worthy of her hands in marriage, which meant he had failed in the competition to attract her, and his fate did not favour him this time like it had favoured him earlier when he had fought and defeated his enemies.]

Verse no. 59:

अथोरगाख्यस्य पुरस्य नाथम् दौवारिकी देवसरूपमेत्या
इतश्चकोराक्षि विलोकयेति पूर्वानुशिष्टाम् निजगाद भोज्याम्॥ ६-५९

athoragākhyasya purasya nātham dauvārikī devasarūpametya|
itaścakorākṣi vilokayeti pūrvānuśiṣṭām nijagāda bhojyām || 6-59

6-59. Thence, the trusted chamberlain and maid Sunanda took Indumati, the princess of the Bhoj dynasty of the kingdom of Vidharva, to the next suitor in the line-up. He was the prince of the kingdom with its beautiful capital city at Uragpur (literally meaning a city named after the deity of the snakes; the present-day city of Nagpur in central India).

When they stood before the prince, Sunanda said to Indumati: "Oh pretty princess with eyes as beautiful as those of the Chakor bird! Look here and pay attention to what I am saying.

[Note--The Chakor bird is the Indian red-legged partridge. Poets employ this bird to indicate a lovelorn person. Sunanda implies that if Indumati fails to choose any one of the competing suitors, and continues to move from one to another, then she would have to suffer a lonely life devoid of any lover who would be able to satisfy her natural desire to be loved and cared for.]

Verse no. 60:

पाण्ड्योऽयमंसापितलम्बहारः कृप्ताङ्गरागो हरिचन्दनेन
आभाति बालातपरक्तसानुः सनिर्झरोद्गार इवाद्रिराजः॥ ६-६०

pāṇḍyo'yamaṁsārpitalambahāraḥ kṛptāṅgarāgo haricandanena |
ābhāti bālātaparakṭasānuḥ sanirjharodgāra ivādrirājaḥ || 6-60

6-60. This prince is the ruler of the kingdom of Pandayas (in the south of India, the present-day state of Tamil Nadu and parts of Kerala). A large garland hangs around his neck, and a paste of hari-chandan (sandalwood) has been smeared all over his body. In his present attire he looks like a mountain in the Himalayan range whose summit looks reddish-yellow in the sunlight of the rising sun in the morning hours, and from which many streams fall down as water-falls.

[Note--The prince has a dark complexion like the side of a mountain as it would look when viewed from its western side in the early hours of the morning when the sun is still on the eastern horizon. The garland of flowers draped on the prince's high shoulders looked like a water-fall cascading down the mountain's side from its summit. And the paste of sandalwood makes his dark complexioned body look reddish-yellow in hue.

In this context it is to be noted that males in the south are usually draped with a single body-covering length of cloth, with the upper part of the body usually uncovered, unlike their northern brethren who cover their full body, including their torso, because of the general hot environment of that region. And to keep the body cool, people apply sandalwood paste. Besides this, all noble men wear a garland around their necks. This is the reason why the prince of the Pandayas has been described by Sunanda as having sandalwood paste smeared all over his body, and wearing a garland.]

Verse no. 61:

विन्ध्यस्य संस्तम्भयिता महाद्रेर्निःशेषपीतोर्ज्जितसिन्धुराजः |
प्रीत्याश्वमेधावभृथार्द्रमूर्तेः सौस्नातिको यस्य भवत्यगस्त्यः॥ ६-६१

vindhyasya saṁstambhayitā mahādreṇiḥśeṣapītojjhitasindhurājaḥ |

prītyāśvamedhāvabhṛthārdramūrteḥ sausnātiko yasya bhavatyagastyah || 6-61

6-61. When this prince successfully completes his horse-sacrifice (i.e. the Ashwamedha Yagya) and finishes his rituals, he is paid a courtesy visit by the great sage Agastya who is famed for his remarkable feat of stopping Mt. Vindhyachal from rising higher into the sky, and also for drinking the ocean and then spitting it out.

[Note--Sage Agastya was a great Vedic-era sage who had his hermitage south of the Vindhyachal range of mountains.

These two legends that are attached with him are briefly as follows:

(i) Stopping further rise of Mt. Vindhyachal: The story of sage Agastya stopping Mt. Vindhyachal from rising too high in the sky is narrated in the Mahabharat, Vanaparva, Chapter 104. Briefly it is as follows:

The Sun-God, who goes around Mt. Sumeru, the golden mountain, daily, was once asked by the patron deity of Mt. Vindhyachal to go around this mountain as well. The Sun-God, however, declined, saying that his course or path through the heavens (sky) has been determined by the Creator, and hence he has no authority to violate it by going around some other mountain. This annoyed the deity of Mt. Vindhyachal who decided to raise the mountain to such an height that it would stand in the way of the Sun-God's course through the firmament, thereby obstructing his path and preventing him from circling Mt. Sumeru.

The gods residing on Mt. Sumeru were alarmed and flummoxed at this sudden and extraordinary development. They approached the mighty sage Agastya and sought his help to restrain Mt. Vindhyachal from getting higher and obstructing the path of the Sun. The sage devised a stratagem and went to the Mt. Vindhyachal, and asked its deity to give him way so that he can move on towards the south direction from the northern plains. The deity representing Mt. Vindhyachal prostrated before the revered sage to pay respects to him, and allowed him to cross over its body (i.e. the mountain) to the other side. The sage went to the other side but asked the deity keep the mountain thus prostrated (i.e. lie low) till the time the sage came back from his mission. The deity had to obey the sage. However, the sage never returned that way, and hence Mt. Vindhyachal kept on lying low ever since that time. In this way, the wise sage had successfully prevented Mt. Vindhyachal from rising heavenwards and obstructing the path of the Sun.

The great poet Kalidas has referred to the incident related to sage Agastya and Mt. Vindya or Vindhyachal in his 'Raghuvansham', Chapter 12, verse no. 31.

(ii) Drinking of the ocean: According to legend, sage Agastya had dried up the ocean by drinking it in three gulps. He had used the joint palms of his hands to scoop up the water to gulp it down.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanaparva, Cantos 103-105; and (iv) Anand Ramayan, Vilaas Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-24. This feat of sage Agastya is cited by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

There are three versions of how Agastya had drunk the ocean. Let us read them in brief now.

(a) Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

(b) This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the Anand Ramayan (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

According to this legend, the ocean had washed away the items of worship that sage Agastya had arranged for his routine religious rituals. Agastya became peeved and drank up the ocean. When the gods prayed to him to forgive the ocean, the kind sage obliged and refilled it in the form of his urine. That is the reason why the ocean is bitter and salty like urine.

(c) The third version is this: Sage Agastya once took pity on a bird whose eggs were washed away by the ocean. The grieving bird was trying to dry the water of the ocean by picking drops of it in its beak. Then the sage decided to punish the ocean by drinking it up.

In all these versions, one thing is found common, and it is that the sage had invoked the divine powers of Lord Ram to accomplish this unique feat. He had pronounced the Mantra (spiritual formula to invoke the cosmic powers of a chosen deity) of Lord Ram, which is 'Raamaaye Raamchandraaye Raambhadraaye'.]

Verse no. 62:

अस्त्रम् हरादाप्तवता दुरापम् येनेन्द्रलोकावजयाय दृप्तः।
पुरा जनस्थानविमर्दशङ्की संधाय लङ्काधिपतिः प्रतस्थे॥ ६-६२

astram harādāptavatā durāpam yenendralokāvajayāya dr̥ptah।
purā janasthānavimardaśaṅkī saṁdhāya laṅkādhīpatiḥ pratasthe || 6-62

6-62. When the gallant and brave demon king Ravana of Lanka, famed for his valour and strength, decided to go and conquer Indra, the lord of heaven, he first made friendship with this ruler of the Pandaya dynasty to avoid the risk of a backlash, for Ravana feared that there were chances that this prince could side with Indra and create havoc in the demon king's backyard by destroying the habitat of Khar and Dushan, the two cousins of Ravana and his trusted commanders who ruled the forested area called Janasthan (located deep in the dense and uninhabited area of the wilds called Dandakaranya forest).

Ravana's fear was genuine as the prince of Pandaya kingdom had pleased Lord Shiva and obtained an invincible weapon called 'Brahma-Shira' (literally meaning an arrow or spear that had a tip charged with extraordinary supernatural powers), which made the prince invincible so much so that neither Ravana nor any of his demon warriors would be able to stand before this prince in battle. {Which simply meant that the prince would easily kill Khar and Dushan and destroy their habitat to punish Ravana for invading heaven. There were also chances that in the absence of Ravana, the prince would invade Lanka and cause havoc there to the chagrin of the demon king. Further, the prince could pursue Ravana from behind his back, and in the battle with Indra, he could attack Ravana from behind, leaving the demon king defenceless in the rear.}

[Note--Ravana was well aware of the powers and abilities of the prince of the Pandaya kingdom which was situated on the opposite side of the demon kingdom of Lanka across the ocean. So, Ravana thought it wise and strategic to make friendship with this prince before he went on to heaven to vanquish Indra, as Ravana did not wish to leave his backyard open to risks while he was away in heaven. The idea which Sunanda impressed upon princess Indumati was about the might and valour of this prince as even Ravana, the powerful demon king of Lanka who was renowned for his invincibility and valour, preferred to be on friendly terms with him.

Khar and Dushan were trusted commanders of Ravana who were assigned the task of taking care of the demon forces living in the wild forests south of the Vindhya range of mountains in mainland India, i.e. in the region that lay in and around the kingdom of the Pandayas. The larger area of forest was called Dandakaranya, and the particular place where these two brothers lived was called Janasthan. The mother of Khar and Dushan was a sister of Ravana's mother Kaikesi.]

Verse no. 63:

अनेन पाणौ विधिवद्गृहीते महाकुलीनेन महीव गुर्वी|
रत्नानुविद्धार्णवमेखलाया दिशः सपत्नी भव दक्षिणस्याः॥ ६-६३

anena pāṇau vidhivadgrhīte mahākūlīnena mahīva gurvī|
ratnānuviddhārṇavamekhalāyā diśaḥ sapatnī bhava dakṣiṇasyāḥ || 6-63

6-63. If you wed this prince of the Pandayas by duly following all the religious procedures, you will become a source of envy for the deity of the earth because then you would replace her to become a queen of the earth which is girdled by the ocean, a treasure-house of priceless gems, on three sides.

{Conversely, it can also mean that 'you would become a queen who wears a semi-circular girdle studded with gems that would surround your waist.' This 'girdle' refers to the ocean that clamps the kingdom of the Pandayas from three sides, east, south and west, much like a '3-way edge clamp or a 3-pronged claw or a Cardellini clamp'. Since the ocean contains many priceless gems, it is compared to a gem-studded girdle that the deity of the earth wears at present, and which would also be worn by Indumati when she becomes a queen of that place.}

[Note--The Pandaya kingdom, situated at the southern end of the Indian sub-continent in the region that now has the state of Tamil Nadu and a part of Kerala, has the ocean on three of its sides, east, south and west. The deity of the earth is worshipped by the prince as well as his subjects as being equivalent to the queen of the kingdom, but once the prince weds Indumati, she would obviously replace this deity to become the queen. Hence, the deity would be envious of her, which in itself would be a great matter of honour and privilege for Indumati.]

Verse no. 64:

ताम्बूलवल्लीपरिणद्धपूगास्वेलालतालिङ्गितचन्दनासु|
तमालपत्रास्तरणासु रन्तुम् प्रसीद शश्वन्मलयस्थलीषु॥ ६-६४

tāmbūlavallīpariṇaddhapūgāsvelālatāliṅgitacandanāsu|
tamālapatrāstaraṇāsu rantum prasīda śaśvanmalayasthālīṣu || 6-64

6-64. If you want to enjoy moving around the valleys of Mt. Malaya and derive pleasure from the beauty of Nature in their midst, then you should marry this prince. In these exceptionally charming valleys, there are trees of areca nuts around the trunks of which are wrapped creepers of betel leaves. There are also sandalwood trees on which are wrapped creepers of cardamom. As for something to serve as bed-spread upon which to lie down, there are aromatic leaves of the black Tamala tree (known as the Indian Bay leaf or the Tejpatta; botanical name is Cinnamomum tamala).

[Note--Mt. Malaya is situated in the southern-most parts of the Western Ghata in south India, in the region of the ancient kingdom of the Pandayas that corresponds to the states

of Tamil Nadu and parts of Kerala in modern India. This area is famous for cardamom, betel nut and sandalwood trees.]

Verse no. 65:

**इन्दीवरश्यामतनूर्नृपोऽसौ त्वम् रोचनागौरशरीरयष्टिः।
अन्योन्यशोभापरिवृद्धये वाम् योगस्तडित्तोयदयोरिवास्तु॥ ६-६५**

indīvaraśyāmatanurnrpo'sau tvam rocanāgaurāśarīrayaṣṭiḥ|
anyonyaśobhāparivṛddhaye vām yogastadittoyadayorivāstu || 6-65

6-65. This prince has a dark complexion like a deep-blue lotus flower, while your Indumati's) complexion is fair like gorachan¹ (which has a reddish-orange or yellow colour). So therefore, if you choose to wed this prince, it would make an eye-catching pair, and you would look as wonderful as lightening against the background of dark clouds (represented by this prince).

[Note--¹The 'Gorochan' is a rare, fragrant, reddish-orange or yellow coloured pigment derived from the gall bladder, or even from the gall-stones of cows, bulls or yaks. It is rare as well as highly revered in Hinduism and used during rituals, to apply on the forehead as a mark called 'Tilak', or even smeared on the body like a paste of sandalwood. It is believed to have medicinal properties, including curing skin diseases and fever, bring good luck, and act as antidote to negative energies.

In this analogy, Indumati is likened to the dazzling lightening which shines against the backdrop of dark clouds, where the dark clouds themselves symbolise this dark-complexioned prince.

It is due to a genetic background and environmental factors that people of south India are usually dark-complexioned, whereas those of central India, where the kingdom of Indumati's brother king Bhoj was situated, have a wheatish or light brown complexion which is fairer compared to those further down in the south.]

Verse no. 66:

**स्वसुर्विदर्भाधिपतेस्तदीयो लेभेऽन्तरम् चेतसि नोपदेशः।
दिवाकरादर्शनबद्धकोशे नक्षत्रनाथांशुरिवारविन्दे॥ ६-६६**

svasurvidarbhādhīpateṣṭadīyo lebhe'ntaram cetasi nopadeśaḥ|
divākaraḍarśanabaddhakośe nakṣatranāthāṁśurivāravinde || 6-66

6-66. Even as the rays of the moon, however soothing and beautiful, finds no favour with the lotus flower as it remains closed in the light of the moon and opens only in the light of the sun, although it is hot and blinding, during the daytime, so was the case with Indumati whose heart remained shut towards the prince of the Pandaya kingdom inspite of her companion Sunanda extolling all the good virtues and qualities of this prince while

trying to impress upon Indumati how she would benefit if she marries him. {To wit, all the exhortations of Sunanda failed to arouse any positive response from Indumati as she remained unmoved and disinterested.}

Verse no. 67:

संचारिणी दीपशिखेव रात्रौ यम् यम् व्यतीयाय पतिंवरा सा
नरेन्द्रमार्गाट् इव प्रपेदे विवर्णभावम् स स भूमिपालः॥ ६-६७

saṁcārīṇī dīpaśikheva rātrau yam yam vyatīyāya patimvarā sā |
narendramārgāṭṭa iva prapede vivarṇabhāvam sa sa bhūmipālaḥ || 6-67

6-67. Just like the instance of a lighted lamp, with its brilliant illumination, held aloft by royal torch-bearers who move down a street during the night as part of their routine march-past, would temporarily illuminate the buildings along the street through which the lamp passes, leaving these buildings once again in the dark as soon as the lamp moves on, so was the case of all the hopeful princes whose faces would light up when Sunanda stood before each one of them and outlined their greatness and abilities to princess Indumati, but as soon as the princess rejected them and decided to move on to the next competitor, the faces of the princes concerned would suddenly lose their shine and drop down. {These princes felt like a defeated knight; their jaws dropped down, faces hung in shame, and they lowered their eyes to avoid making eye-contact with anyone else.}

Verse no. 68:

तस्याम् रघोः सूनुरुपस्थितायाम् वृणीत माम् नेति समाकुलोऽभूत्
वामेतरः संशयमस्य बाहुः केयूरबन्धोच्छवसितैर्नुनोद॥ ६-६८

tasyām raghoḥ sūnurupasthitāyām vṛṇīta mām neti samākulo'bhūt |
vāmetaraḥ saṁśayamasya bāhuḥ keyūrabandhocchvasitairnunoda || 6-68

6-68. When finally Indumati reached prince Aja, the son of king Raghu, and stood before him (like she had been doing till now), the prince's heart became anxious whether she would wed him or not. But at that moment an auspicious sign occurred--his right bicep, where a prince would usually tie a symbol of victory that he wears after duly conducting a religious ritual, began fluttering, which indicated that something positive was about to happen.

According to the manual that describes such omens, if the right bicep flutters in situations similar to the present one, then the person concerned is assured of success--i.e. he would successfully marry the lady concerned.

[Note--Prince Aja had been watching the proceedings closely. By the way Indumati had rejected all other suitors without even a second thought, prince Aja developed doubts about the way she would treat him.]

Verse no. 69:

तम् प्राप्य सर्वावयवानवद्यम् व्यावर्ततान्योपगमात्कुमारी।
न हि प्रफुल्लम् सहकारमेत्य वृक्षान्तरम् काङ्क्षति षट्पदाली॥ ६-६९

tam prāpya sarvāvayavānavadyam vyāvartatānyopagamātkumārī|
na hi praphullam sahakārametya vṛkṣāntaram kāṅkṣati ṣaṭpadālī || 6-69

6-69. Even as black bees stop wandering from tree to tree once they find a mango tree in full blossom with ripe fruits, so was also the case with Indumati, for when she saw prince Aja's majestic, magnetic and handsome personality, she was so charmed that she decided not to go to any other prince, as Aja was completely to her liking.

[Note--It was a perfect instance of 'love at first sight'. Sunanda, Indumati's maid, would go about her routine narrative regarding prince Aja's glories and achievements, like she had been doing for the rest of the princes. But she needn't have done so, because Indumati had already made up her mind that she would put the garland on Aja.]

Verse no. 70:

तस्मिन्समावेशितचित्तवृत्तिमिन्दुप्रभामिन्दुमतीमवेक्ष्य।
प्रचक्रमे वक्तुमनुक्रमज्ञा सविस्तरम् वाक्यमिदम् सुनन्दा॥ ६-७०

tasminsamāveśitacittavṛttiminduprabhāmindumatīmavekṣya|
pracakrame vaktumanukramajñā savistaram vākyaamidam sunandā || 6-70

6-70. Realising that Indumati, who was as beautiful and charming as the radiance of the full moon, was enamoured of prince Aja, her maid Sunanda, who was an expert in articulate speech and practical enough to know how to modify or modulate her narrative so as to suit or conform to the listener's views and emotions at a given point of time, then began to describe the glories and achievements of the prince elaborately.

Verse no. 71:

इक्ष्वाकुवंश्यः ककुदम् नृपाणाम् ककुत्स्थ इत्याहितलक्षणोऽभूत्।
काकुत्स्थशब्दम् यत उन्नतेच्छाः श्लाघ्यम् दधत्युत्तरकोसलेन्द्राः॥ ६-७१

ikṣvākuvaṁśyaḥ kakudam nṛpāṇām kakutstha ityāhitalakṣaṇo'bhūt |
kākutsthaśabdham yata unnateccchāḥ ślāghyam dadhatyuttarakosalendrāḥ || 6-71

6-71. In the dynasty of king Ikshwaku, there was a famous king named Kakutstha who was an excellent king and famous for his stellar qualities. The result was that many other

kings of Uttar Kaushal (the northern territories) assumed this title of 'Kakutstha' so that they can gain easy fame.

[Note--The idea which Sunanda impressed upon Indumati was that prince Aja was a descendant of a family of great kings who traced their origin directly to the ancient king Ikshwaku in whose dynasty a great king named Kakutstha was born. As time passed, there were many branches or offshoots of this family, but the main branch who ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya descended directly from Kakutstha and belonged to the dynasty of king Ikshwaku. Presently, prince Aja belonged to the family that rules the kingdom of Ayodhya. This is understandable because the eldest son of a king ascended the throne, and others in the family, such as brothers, cousins and others had the same family surname, but were not the rulers.]

Verse no. 72:

**महेन्द्रमास्थाय महोक्षरूपम् यः संयति प्राप्तपिनाकिलीलः।
चकार बाणैरसुराङ्गनानाम् गण्डस्थलीः प्रोषितपत्रलेखाः॥ ६-७२**

mahendramāsthāya mahokṣarūpam yaḥ saṁyati prāptapinākīlīlaḥ |
cakāra bāṇairasurāṅganānām gaṇḍasthalīḥ proṣitapatralekhāḥ || 6-72

6-72. During the legendary battle between the gods and the demons, king Kakutstha, (the forefather of prince Aja), had mounted the back of a bull which was actually Indra, the king of gods, in that form, and then he slayed the demons with his arrows by assuming the role of Lord Shiva who also mounts a bull named Nandi. When the demons were eliminated, their women folk had become widows, and stricken with grief they had thrown away their decorative ornaments which they had been wearing, and washed-off all fragrant ointments that they had applied on their cheeks earlier.

Verse no. 73:

**ऐरावतस्फालनविश्लथम् यः संघट्टयन्नङ्गदमङ्गदेन।
उपेयुषः स्वामपि मूर्तिमग्र्यामर्धासनम् गोत्रभिदोऽधितष्ठौ॥ ६-७३**

airāvatasphālanaviślatham yaḥ saṁghaṭṭayannaṅgadamaṅgadena |
upeyuṣaḥ svāmapi mūrtimagryāmarḍhasanam gotrabhido'dhitaṣṭhau || 6-73

6-73. When the gods won the battle, Indra reverted back to his original form, and riding on the back of his mighty elephant known as Irawat he headed to heaven to sit on his throne. Indra discovered that the ornament on his bicep had become loose because of the strains that the muscles of his forearm had undergone during the battle with the demons, as well as while driving his elephant.

Meanwhile, Indra invited king Kakutstha to share the throne of heaven with him by sitting on one half of the throne as a mark of thanksgiving and show of gratitude to the

king for aiding the gods in their fight with the demons. The two, Indra and king Kakutstha, sat so close that their bicep ornaments rubbed against each other.

[Note--The idea is that king Kakutstha was so great and powerful that once he had the honour and privilege of sharing the throne of heaven with Indra. This was a rarest of rare feat because, first, it was the throne of heaven and not of some king on earth, and second, no king would normally share his throne with another king until and unless there was something very special that would motivate the king to invite another king to share his throne as a mark of respect to the latter.]

Verse no. 74:

जातः कुले तस्य किलोरुकीर्तिः कुलप्रदीपो नृपतिर्दिलीपः।
अतिष्ठदेकोनशतक्रतुत्वे शक्राभ्यसूयाविनिवृत्तये यः॥ ६-७४

jātaḥ kule tasya kilorukīrtiḥ kulapradīpo nṛpatirdilīpaḥ।
atiṣṭhadekonaśatakratutve śakrābhyasūyāvinivṛttaye yaḥ || 6-74

6-74. In the lineage of that great ancient king Kakutstha was born another great king named Dilip who was renowned for his excellent qualities and virtuousness, and like a lamp that illuminates its surroundings, king Dilip too made the glories of this illustrious family shine in the world. King Dilip was of such a magnanimous, obliging and gracious nature that after completing ninety-nine Ashwamedha Yagyas (horse sacrifices), he stopped short of performing another sacrifice to complete one-hundred such sacrifices that would have entitled him direct access to heaven as well as the right to the heaven's throne, just in order to please Indra, the king of heaven, who became unnecessarily jealous of king Dilip and asked the latter to desist from completing the full circuit of a hundred sacrifices, because Indra feared that Dilip might usurp his throne in heaven if he successfully completes one-hundred horse sacrifices (even though Dilip had no such intentions at all).

[Note--This episode is narrated in detail in Canto 3 of this book 'Raghuvansham'.

Indra is a stellar example of someone who is exceptionally selfish, greedy and suspicious of everyone else. He always fears that someone wants to grab his throne in heaven, so therefore he throws in a spanner wherever he finds some great soul doing something good and auspicious that would sufficiently empower the latter to obtain lordship in heaven. This jealousy of Indra extends to everyone, whether he be a king or a sage. It is such a paradoxical situation that inspite of being a resident of heaven where it is supposed only good people with good virtues go, Indra exhibits such deplorable traits as selfishness and use of all means of deceit and conceit to ensure that his throne of heaven remains securely with him. An example of his low or cheap mentality to accomplish his objective by any means is evident when he became a bull and allowed king Kakutstha to ride on his back just to ensure that the demons cannot recognise him and go straight for his blood in the gods-demons war as outlined in verse no. 72 herein above.

Who with true worth, self-respect and dignity would allow anyone else to ride on his back by disguising himself as an animal (bull in this case) just to conceal his identity out of fear of death at the hands of a powerful adversary (in this case the ferocious demons who were baying for Indra's blood) like Indra had done?

In the next verse no. 73 we read that Indra shared his throne with king Kakutstha, but was careful to sit on one-half of it himself so that the king was prevented from occupying the whole throne and then refusing to give up, in which case Kakutstha would have become a king of heaven to replace Indra. It goes without saying that this probability was unacceptable for Indra, so he sat himself alongside the king on the throne so that his grab remains steady.]

Verse no. 75:

यस्मिन्महीम् शासति वाणिनीनाम् निद्राम् विहारार्धपथे गतानाम्
वातोऽपि नासंसयदंशुकानि को लम्बयेदाहरणाय हस्तम्॥ ६-७५

yasminmahīm śāsati vāṇinīnām nidrām viharārdhapathe gatānām |
vāto'pi nāsaṁsayadaṁśukāni ko lambayedāharaṇāya hastam || 6-75

6-75. King Dilip was a ruler of exceptionally high morals and ethics, a king who practiced highest degree of self-control over the senses and sensual urges of the body, not only himself but also ensured that everyone else in his kingdom also observed highest standards of morality and ethical conduct so much so that even the wind, which by nature has the ability to go anywhere it likes without being noticed, had no courage to sneak in quietly to flap or fiddle with the clothes of young ladies who might be relaxing lazily under the open sky.

[Note--King Dilip enforced highest standards of morality and ethics in his kingdom, and took care that no one, even the invisible wind-god, dared to violate the chastity and integrity of women folk of the land under his rule. Promiscuity, vulgarity, inappropriate touching, or any other action driven by desire for enjoying sensual pleasures were totally prohibited.]

Verse no. 76:

पुत्रो रघुस्तस्य पदम् प्रशास्ति महाक्रतोर्विश्वजितः प्रयोक्ता
चतुर्दिगावर्जितसंभृताम् यो मृत्पात्रशेषामकरोद्विभूतिम्॥ ६-७६

putro raghustasya padam praśāsti mahākratorviśvajitaḥ prayoktā |
caturdigāvarjitasaṁbhṛtām yo mṛtpātraśeṣāmakarodvibhūtim || 6-76

6-76. King Dilip's son was named Raghu; he ascended the throne after his father. King Raghu conquered all the four directions of the earth and acquired immense wealth. After successfully completing his campaign of victory, called 'Digvijaya', king Raghu

performed a religious ritual known as 'Vishwa-jeet Yagya', literally meaning a fire sacrifice to mark the conquest of the world, which was regarded as mandatory after such campaigns. During this ritual, king Raghu gave away all the wealth he had acquired to alms seekers and elderly Brahmins by way of charity or donation, keeping nothing with himself except a clay pot like the one held by ascetics.

[Note--These facts have been clearly narrated in Canto no. 4, verse no. 86, and Canto no. 5, verse nos. 12, 16, 22.

In the next verse no. 77, Sunanda praises king Raghu, the father of prince Aja, in glowing terms, raising his status from being merely a king of a particular kingdom to an emperor whose sway extended to all the corners of the world. And in the following verse no. 78, she praises prince Aja, the candidate in front of princess Indumati, by likening him to his illustrious father, a worthy son of a great father, who carries aloft the torch of glory and fame of his famed family with ease and elan.]

Verse no. 77:

आरूढमद्रीनुदधीन्वितीर्णम् भुजंगमानाम् वसतिम् प्रविष्टम् |
ऊर्ध्वम् गतम् यस्य न चानुबन्धि यशः परिच्छेत्तुमियत्तयालम् ॥ ६-७७

ārūḍhamadrīnudadhīnvitīrṇam bhujaṅgamānām vasatim praviṣṭam |
ūrdhvam gatam yasya na cānubandhi yaśaḥ paricchettumiyattayālam || 6-77

6-77. Emperor Raghu's fame and glory extends to all the corners of this world so much so that none in this world can be compared with him. His sway has reached as high as the mountains, as far as the other side of the oceans, and has covered even the subterranean (nether) world of the Nagas (the mythical serpents who live in the nether world) as well as the heavens (where gods live). In other words, his reign, his majesty and his authority are all-pervading, limitless, and beyond all measurement.

Verse no. 78:

असौ कुमारस्तमजोऽनुजातस्त्रिविष्टपस्येव पतिम् जयन्तः |
गुर्वीम् धुरम् यो जगतस्य पित्रा धुर्येण दम्यः सदृशम् बिभर्ति ॥ ६-७८

asau kumārastamajo'nujātastriviṣṭapasyeva patim jayantah |
gurvīm dhuram yo jagatasya pitrā dhuryeṇa damyaḥ sadṛśam bibharti || 6-78

6-78. Just like Jayant was born as a son of Indra, the king of heaven, so likewise this prince Aja is born as a great and worthy son of emperor Raghu. This being so, he (Aja) has inherited the reign, the authority, the glory, the fame and the majesty of his illustrious father, king Raghu.

Like his father king Raghu, who is well experienced in all the spheres of statecraft, this prince Aja too has established himself as a competent ruler who has, under

the guidance of his father, learnt all the aspects and intricacies of diplomacy and statecraft (although he is still young and works as an apprentice under the skilful guidance of his learned father).

[Note--To give Aja a first-hand experience of carrying out the duties of governing such a vast empire, king Raghu, like a good teacher would do to train his ward, made him carry out the day-to-day functions of governance, while keeping a supervisory eye over him.

King Raghu was still alive, so Sunanda has carefully crafted her words to sound diplomatically honourable and nice. While his father was alive, it would be highly improper and rude to say that prince Aja has 'become a king' and 'inherited the throne' of the kingdom from his father, though in practice Aja was a de-facto ruler of the kingdom of Ayodhya as his father had delegated all authorities to him. Yet, while king Raghu was alive, prince Aja would actually remain an heir-apparent and a crown prince, not a full-fledged king. So therefore, it was diplomatically courteous to say that prince Aja was working as an apprentice under the skilful guidance of his father, king Raghu.]

Verse no. 79:

कुलेन कान्त्या वयसा नवेन गुणैश्च तैस्तैर्विनयप्रधानैः।

त्वमात्मनस्तुल्यममुम् वृणीष्व रत्नम् समागच्छतु काञ्चनेन॥ ६-७९

kulena kāntyā vayasā navena guṇaiśca taistairvinayapradhānaiḥ |

tvamātmanastulyamamum vṛṇīṣva ratnam samāgacchatu kāñcanena || 6-79

6-79. This prince Aja is most suitable for you, for he possesses all the excellent characteristics that ought to be present in a prince whom you would wed. He has an excellent family background, is young and handsome, possesses virtuousness and good qualities such as modesty, mercy, compassion, charity, courteousness, strength, power, et al.

Therefore, it would be such a glorious thing to have a union between gold and gemstone, because the value of a gemstone would be enhanced manifold times when it is matched with the purity of gold in an ornament on which it is studded, and conversely also, the value of the gold ornament would be enhanced many times if a gemstone is studded on it. Both the gold and the gemstone play a complimentary role in an ornament, as the value of an ornament depends on the purity of its gold as well as the gemstone that is used to decorate it."

[Note--In this verse, prince Aja is compared to a gold ornament, and princess Inudmati to a gemstone. Just like the case of gold and gemstone complimenting each other when used together in an ornament, enhancing the value of the ornament, so would the glory of both the families of prince Aja and princess Indumati be enhanced if they come together by this matrimonial alliance. Though, of course, both the gold and the gemstone have their independent value as standalone entities, but when they are united to form a gemstone-studded gold ornament, the combined entity has a greater value.]

Verse no. 80:

ततः सुनन्दावचनावसाने लज्जाम् तनूकृत्य नरेन्द्रकन्या
दृष्ट्या प्रसादामलया कुमारम् प्रत्यग्रहीत्संवरणस्रजेव ॥ ६-८०

tataḥ sunandāvacanāvasāne lajjām tanūkr̥tya narendrakanyā|
dr̥ṣṭyā prasādāmalayā kumāram pratyagrahītsaṁvaraṇasrajeva || 6-80

6-80. After hearing patiently what Sunanda had to say, princess Indumati made up her mind to accept prince Aja as her bridegroom. With this intention, she looked steadily at the prince with a lot of love and respect in her eyes, as if this gaze itself was a symbolic victory garland that she now intended to put on prince Aja. {With this gaze, Indumati silently asked Aja's if he would accept her, and when the prince looked back straight into her eyes, the answer that he was willing to accept her hand in marriage was unambiguously clear.]

[Note--Princess Indumati decided that she would wed prince Aja. So she looked directly in his eyes, indicating to him that he was her final choice. They looked at each other steadily for sometime as if the time itself had stood still. It was a silent nod from both of them that they accept each other as their life-partners.

As has been observed earlier in this narration, there was all probability that princess Indumati had already decided to marry prince Aja even before the formality of the selection process had started. Her brother, king Bhoj, had briefed her in advance about the eligibility of prince Aja as her future husband, and in order to ensure that she did not mix things up at the arena, the king had arranged a special seat for prince Aja that was different from others. When Indumati arrived at the central platform with her trusted maid Sunanda, the latter quietly whispered into her ears the exact location where prince Aja sat. But traditions and customs had to be duly observed in order to avoid unnecessary controversy. That is why Indumati went round the assembled princes one by one, but inspite of her maid Sunanda's detailed description of the qualities and glories of all individual candidates, she paid no heed to any one of them, and proceeded to the next candidate after a brief halt before the first.]

Verse no. 81:

सा यूनि तस्मिन्नभिलाषबन्धम् शशाक शालीनतया न वक्तुम्
रोमाञ्चलक्ष्येण स गात्रयष्टिम् भित्त्वा निराक्रामदरालकेश्याः ॥ ६-८१

sā yūni tasminnabhilāṣabandham śaśāka śālinatayā na vaktum|
romāñcalakṣyeṇa sa gātrayaṣṭim bhittvā nirākrāmadarālakeśyāḥ || 6-81

6-81. The young princess Indumati could not express her love and passion for the young prince Aja in words because of the necessity of observing decency and modesty in public, yet her emotions were so overwhelming that they spilled over the body of the curly-haired princess and manifested themselves by way of thrill that made the hairs on her body stand on their edges.

Verse no. 82:

तथागतायाम् परिहासपूर्वम् सख्याम् सखी वेत्रभृदाबभाषे |
आर्ये व्रजामोऽन्यत इत्यथैनाम् वधूरसूयाकुटिलम् ददर्श ॥ ६-८२

tathāgatāyām parihāsapūrvam sakhyām sakhī vetrabhṛdābabhāṣe |
ārye vrajāmo'nyata ityathainām vadhūrasūyākuṭīlam dadarśa || 6-82

6-82. When Sunanda, the trusted maid, observed that princess Indumati had developed a special liking for prince Aja and was enamoured of him, she (Sunanda) prodded Indumati, by way of teasing her, to move ahead to the next candidate, saying: "Oh Princess! Let us move to other princes who are waiting in line for you."

At this, Indumati frowned at Sunanda and snubbed her with a scornful glance, as if to indicate to the latter to stop prodding her anymore, because she has made her choice.

Verse no. 83:

सा चूर्णगौरम् रघुनन्दनस्य धात्रीकराभ्याम् करभोपमोरुः |
आसञ्जयामास यथाप्रदेशम् कण्ठे गुणम् मूर्तमिवानुरागम् ॥ ६-८३

sā cūrṇagauram raghunandanasya dhātrīkarābhyām karabhopamorūḥ |
āsañjayāmāsa yathāpradeśam kaṇṭhe guṇam mūrtamivānurāgam || 6-83

6-83. The princess with a slender thigh, i.e. Indumati, then asked Sunanda to drape the victory garland, which had already been dusted with a red powder of kumkum (a mixture of turmeric and slaked lime, considered auspicious), around the neck of prince Aja, the son of king Raghu, on her behalf. At that time, this garland personified Indumati's true love and affection for prince Aja. {It appeared that Indumati had herself embraced Aja when this garland was draped around the neck of the prince.}

[Note--Indumati was holding this garland herself--as is clear when we read verse no. 25 with respect to her bowing before the prince of Magadh and moving ahead. At that time, this garland had slipped a little bit from her hand as she made a polite bow of refusal.

So therefore, in order to observe protocol of modesty and courtesy, she handed over this garland to her companion Sunanda and asked the latter to put it on prince Aja on her behalf, instead of doing it herself.]

Verse no. 84:

तया स्रजा मङ्गलपुष्पमय्या विशालवक्षःस्थललम्बया सः |
अमंस्त कण्ठार्पितबाहुपाशाम् विदर्भराजावरजाम् वरेण्यः ॥ ६-८४

tayā srajā maṅgalapuṣpamayyā viśālavakṣaḥsthalalambayā saḥ |
amaṁsta kaṇṭhārpitabāhupāśām vidarbharājāvarajām vareṇyaḥ || 6-84

6-84. Wearing the beautiful garland made of auspicious flowers¹ that hanged on his chest, prince Aja felt that princess Indumati, the sister of king Bhoj of Vidharva, had herself embraced him by putting her slender arms around his neck.

[Note--The auspicious flowers used to make garlands for rituals and ceremonies in Hinduism are normally rose (called gulab), marigold (called genda), and jasmine (called chameli). But other flowers are also used, such as lotus (called kamal), lily (called kumudani), oleander (called kaner), chrysanthemum (called guldaudi), hibiscus (called javakusum), pinwheel flower (called chandani), magnolia (golden champak), etc.]

Verse no. 85:

शशिनमुपगतेयम् कौमुदी मेघमुक्तं जलनिधिमनुरूपम् जहनुकन्यावतीर्णा |
इति समगुणयोगप्रीतयस्तत्र पौराः श्रवणकटु नृपाणामेकवाक्यम् विवदुः॥ ६-८५

śaśinamupagateyam kaumudī meghamuktaṁ jalanidhimanurūpam
jahnuḥkanyāvatīrṇā |
iti samaguṇayogapṛītayastatra paurāḥ śravaṇakaṭu nṛpāṇāmekavākyaṁ vivavruḥ
|| 6-85

6-85. With the alliance finally in place between the two, princess Indumati and prince Aja, the citizen were jubilant. They cheered and eulogised this marriage between the two who were equally qualified for receiving universal acclaim and honour. They exclaimed that this unique union was like the case when the beautiful Moonlight and the glowing Moon become inseparable from each other once the sky is cleared of clouds, and the case of river Ganges merging with the Ocean to become one and inseparable from it.

As was expected, such praises did not go down well with the other suitors who failed to charm Indumati, for they felt humiliated and took the citizens' applause for the couple as an indirect insult cast upon them.

[Note--In this analogy, Indumati is likened to the Moonlight, and Aja to the Moon. The 'cloud' here refers to the uncertainties that prevailed earlier. Similarly, river Ganges symbolises Indumati, and the Ocean symbolises Aja.]

Verse no. 86:

प्रमुदितवरपक्षमेकतस्तत्क्षितिपतिमण्डलमन्यतो वितानम् |
उषसि सर इव प्रफुल्लपद्मम् कुमुदवनप्रतिपन्ननिद्रमासीत्॥ ६-८६

pramuditavarapakṣamekatastatkṣitipatimaṇḍalamanyato vitānam |
uṣasi sara iva praphullapadmam kumudavanapratipannanidramāsīt || 6-86

6-86. At that time, the venue of the marriage ceremony, known as the 'Swayambar', looked like a pond in the early hours of the morning where, on the one hand, the lotus flowers bloom with the rise of the sun, and on the other hand, the lilies close their petals and look gloomy because they cannot tolerate the sight of the sun (for they prefer moonlight to bloom).

This analogy is apt because on the one side were the citizens who stood up jubilantly to fete, cheer and applaud the union of Indumati and Aja, and on the other side were the crestfallen princes who were highly dejected as they had failed to attract Indumati's attention.

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये षष्ठः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye ṣaṣṭhaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 6th canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 7, verse nos. 1-71:

Introduction

After the selection process of the bridegroom was over, the exhilarant king Bhoj took the newly wed couple, his sister princess Indumati and her bridegroom prince Aja, for a celebratory round of the city. Meanwhile, the other competitors who lost retired to their respective camps with a sullen and dejected face.

The whole capital city was decked up with flowers, garlands, festoons, flags and colourful gates. The citizens lined up on both the sides of the path to have a closer look at the newly wed royal couple. The people were in such a state of excitement that they abandoned whatever thing they were doing to rush forward to have a glimpse of the royal couple. All the windows, balconies, attics and terraces were crowded with ladies craning their necks to see their favourite princess Indumati and her bridegroom prince Aja, while the men-folk jammed on the streets, shoulder-to-shoulder. All of them were of the view that it was good that a Swayambar was held for the princess' wedding in which all the great princes of the land were invited, otherwise how would it have been possible for Indumati to make the best of choice out of so many suitors, a selection well made as every one of the citizens approved of it.

Then the royal procession reached the palace of the king where princess Indumati was formally married to prince Aja in an elaborate Vedic ceremony carried out in accordance with established customs and traditions. After the marriage rituals were completed, king Bhoj showed all possible respect and courtesy to other princes who had attended the Swayambar ceremony, and bid them all an honourable farewell.

The princes who could not marry Indumati, however, were filled with jealousy and outrage. So after they left the city, they got together and conspired to sit in ambush on the road to forcibly abduct Indumati as the marriage party of prince Aja headed home. So therefore, as soon as Aja's marriage procession reached the site of ambush, these jealous princes got up to challenge him for a battle. Aja kept Indumati in safe custody of his trusted minister, and went forward to meet the challenge and teach these rogues a bitter lesson of their lives. In the fierce battle that ensued, Aja employed the magical weapon which the gandharva named Priyamvada had given him earlier* to daze his opponents and leave them benumbed and swooning; the jealous group of princes fell down unconscious on the ground. {*Refer: Canto 5, verse no. 57.}

Having got two victories back-to-back, one was the success in getting the hands of Indumati in marriage, and the other was the defeat of his opponents, prince Aja returned home to his capital city of Ayodhya with the victory trophy symbolised by princess Indumati. His father king Raghu had already been briefed about all the developments by his spies, so he welcomed his victorious son, prince Aja, and his beautiful bride, princess Indumati.

After the initial welcoming ceremonies, king Raghu formally appointed his son, prince Aja, to the throne of the kingdom as its next sovereign by organising a religious ceremony for this purpose. Then the king took retirement from active duties as a king, and began leading a life of quietude and meditation.

With this background information, now let us commence reading this canto verse-by-verse as follows:--

Verse no. 1:

अथोपयन्त्रा सदृशेण युक्ताम् स्कन्देन साक्षादिव देवसेनाम्।

स्वसारमादाय विदर्भनाथः पुरप्रवेशाभिमुखो बभूव॥ ७-१

athopayantrā sadṛśeṇa yuktām skandena sākṣādiva devasenām |
svasāramādāya vidarbhanāthaḥ purapraveśābhimukho babhūva || 7-1

7-1. After the bridegroom selection ceremony known as the Swayambar was over, king Bhoj of Vidharva, accompanied by his sister Indumati and her worthy bridegroom prince Aja, lead a royal procession into the city. At that time, prince Aja looked like a personified form of Skanda (Kartikeya), and Indumati as a personified form of Devasena, the consort of Kartikeya.

[Note--Skanda is another name of Kartikeya, the son of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati. He is a youthful warrior prince of heaven, and a commander-in-chief of the army of gods. Devasena, the consort of Kartikeya, is the daughter of Indra, the king of heaven.]

Verse no. 2:

सेनानिवेशान्पृथिवीक्षितोऽपि जग्मुर्विभातग्रहमन्दभासः।

भोज्याम् प्रति व्यर्थमनोरथत्वादूपेषु वेशेषु च साभ्यसूया॥ ७-२

senānivesāṇpṛthivīkṣito'pi jagmurvibhātagrahamandabhāsaḥ |

bhojyām prati vyarthamanorathat vādrūpeṣu veśeṣu ca sābhyasūyā || 7-2

7-2. The other competing princes who had failed to get the hands of Indumati in marriage appeared like the stars that have faded in the morning sky. They were dejected and full of chagrin, criticising themselves for not being upto the mark and expectation of the princess because of their own looks, attires and demeanours. However, since nothing could be done now, all of them retired gloomily to their respective camps.

Verse no. 3:

सांनिध्ययोगात्किल तत्र शच्याः स्वयंवरक्षोभकृतामभावः।

काकुत्स्थमुद्दिश्य समत्सरोऽपि शशाम तेन क्षितिपाललोकः॥ ७-३

sāmnidhyayogātkila tatra śacyāḥ svayamvarakṣobhakṛtāmabhāvaḥ |

kākutsthamuddiśya samatsaro'pi śaśāma tena kṣitipālalokaḥ || 7-3

7-3. In the hall where the Swayambar ceremony was held, Shachi ('śacyāḥ'; the consort of Indra) was present herself. This is why none of the competitors dared to cause any nuisance, and though they were full of jealousy with prince Aja, they refrained from creating any disturbance.

[Note--In the previous verse no. 1 herein above, we have read that Indumati was like 'Devasena', the daughter of Indra. So this present verse no. 3 fits in well with this observation as it would be natural for Devasena's mother Shachi, the consort of Indra, to be present at the venue where her daughter was selecting her future husband.]

Verse no. 4:

तावत्प्रकीर्णाभिनवोपचारमिन्द्रायुधद्योतिततोरणाङ्कम्।

वरः सवध्वा सह राजमार्गम् प्राप ध्वजच्छायनिवारितोष्णम्॥ ७-४

tāvatprakīrṇābhinavopacāram indrāyudhadyotitatorañāṅkam |

varaḥ savadhvā saha rājamārgam prāpa dhvajacchāyanivāritoṣṇam || 7-4

7-4. The royal procession of prince Aja and his bride princess Indumati progressed slowly through the main street of the capital city. Multicoloured flowers were rained on them, gates and arch-ways of a multitude of colours were erected to welcome them, and the entire route was lavishly decorated with countless flags, festoons and banners so close to each other that the sunlight could not reach the ground.

Verse no. 5:

ततस्तदालोकनतत्पराणाम् सौधेषु चामीकरजालवत्सु॥
बभूवुरित्थम् पुरसुन्दरीणाम् त्यक्तान्यकार्याणि विचेष्टितानि॥ ७-५

tatastadālokanatatparāṇām saudheṣu cāmīkarajālavatsu ||
babhūvurittham purasundarīṇām tyaktānyakāryāṇi viceṣṭitāni || 7-5

7-5. The ladies of the city abandoned whatever work they were engaged in, and rushed to the windows, balconies and terraces of their homes to have a glimpse of the bridegroom, prince Aja (sitting with his bride, princess Indumati).

[Note--The next five verses describe the enthusiasm and eagerness displayed by the women-folk of the city when they rushed to see Aja and Indumati.]

Verse no. 6:

आलोकमार्गम् सहसा व्रजन्त्या कयाचिदुद्वेष्टनवान्तमाल्यः।
बद्धम् न संभावित एव तावत्करेण रुद्धोऽपि च केशपाशः॥ ७-६

ālokamārgam sahasā vrajantya kayācidudveṣṭanavāntamālyah |
baddhum na sambhāvita eva tāvatkareṇa ruddho'pi ca keśapāśah || 7-6

7-6. While the ladies rushed to their windows and balconies to have a look at Aja, they were in such a haste that some of them had the hairs on their heads that had been tied into a bun got loosened and spread over their heads and faces in a dishevelled way, but they did not have time to fold the loosened strands of hair and roll them into a bun once again. These ladies held the loosened strands of hair in their hands, but with the untying of the bun the flowers that she had stuck in the coiled lock of hairs fell off in a shower of flowers, littering the ground where she stood and even falling off on the street below.

Verse no. 7:

प्रसाधिकालम्बितमग्रपादमाक्षिप्य काचिद्द्रवरागमेव।
उत्सृष्टलीलागतिरागवाक्षादलक्तकाङ्काम् पदवीम् ततान॥ ७-७

Prasādhikālambitamagrapāda mākṣipya kācidravarāgameva |
utsṛṣṭalīlāgatiṛāgavākṣādala ktakāṅkāṁ padavīm tatāna || 7-7

7-7. One lady was having her maid paint geometric designs on her feet with an oil based paint of red dye when she heard that the procession of prince Aja was coming that way. So she immediately pulled her feet from the hands of the painter and rushed to the window or the balcony to have a look, leaving the paint on her feet still greasy and wet.

The result was that the ground where she set her foot got dabbed and smeared with the wet paint, right from the place where she was having her feet decorated, to the window or balcony where she dashed to have a glimpse of the royal bridegroom and his bride.

[Note--After some time as the paint dried, these spots on the ground gave a dirty and messy look to the home, and a lot of labour and effort were needed to clean the patches of paint.]

Verse no. 8:

**विलोचनम् दक्षिणमञ्जनेन संभाव्य तद्वञ्चितवामनेत्रा।
तथैव वातायनसंनिकर्षम् ययौ शलाकामपरा वहन्ती॥ ७-८**

suvilocanam dakṣiṇamañjanena sambhāvya tadvañcitavāmanetrā |
tathaiva vātāyanasaṁnikarṣam yayau śalākāmaparā vahanī || 7-8

7-8. One other lady was applying a dye (known as Ajan; mascara) on the outer side of her eyelids to brighten her eye-lashes. She had completed the process in the right eye when she heard of the arrival of the royal procession. So she forgot to apply the dye on her left eye-lash, and still while holding the brush in her hand, she rushed to the window or the balcony of her house to have a glimpse of the procession.

Verse no. 9:

**जालान्तरप्रेषितदृष्टिरन्या प्रस्थानभिन्नाम् न बबन्ध नीवीम्।
नाभिप्रविष्टाभरणप्रभेन हस्तेन तस्थाववलम्ब्य वासः॥ ७-९**

jālāntarapreṣitadrṣṭiranyā prasthānabhinnām na babandha nīvīm |
nābhipraviṣṭābharaṇaprabhena hastena tasthāvavalambya vāsaḥ || 7-9

7-9. Another lady rushed to the window with such haste that the knot that tied her garment and held it place on the upper part of her body got untied. Having no time to stop and tie the knot once again, she held the two corners with her hand while her gaze was fixed at the window so as not to miss a moment of watching the procession pass by on the street. The result was her navel was exposed, and the glitter of the jewellery she wore on her hands shone over the skin of her abdomen thus exposed.

Verse no. 10:

**अर्धाञ्चिता सत्वरमुत्थितायाः पदे पदे दुर्निमिते गलन्ती।
कस्याश्चिदासीद्रशना तदानीमङ्गुष्ठमूलार्पितसूत्रशेषा॥ ७-१०**

ardhāñcitā satvaramutthitāyāḥ pade pade durnimite galantī |
kasyāścidāsīdraśanā tadānīm aṅguṣṭhamūlārpitāsūtraśeṣā || 7-10

7-10. Another lady was threading jewels to form a girdle around her waist. One end of the thread was tied to her toe which acted as a peg to hold it in place while she was sliding jewels in the thread through its other end which she held in her hand. As soon as she heard of the arrival of the royal procession, she immediately got up and rushed to the window. As a result of this haste, all the jewel beads that had already been threaded got scattered all over the floor, and she dragged the thread behind her as one end of it was still tied to her toe.

[Note--In her haste, the lady dropped the end of the thread that she held in her hand while the other end still remained tied to her toe. Since the two ends of the thread had not yet been tied together, the jewel beads slipped out and got scattered around the floor.]

Verse no. 11:

तासाम् मुखैरासवगन्धगर्भैर्व्याप्तान्तराः सान्द्रकुतूहलानाम्।
विलोलनेत्रभ्रमरैर्गवाक्षाः सहस्रपत्राभरणा इवासन्॥ ७-११

tāsām mukhairāsavagandhagarbhair vyāptāntarāḥ sāndrakutūhalānām |
vilolanetrabhramarairgavākṣāḥ sahasrapatrābharaṇā ivāsan || 7-11

7-11. The ladies whose mouths wore a lingering aroma of the herbal drinks they had been drinking, eagerly thronged the windows and balconies to have a glimpse of the royal procession. The sight of these women with lotus-like faces eagerly peering out of their perches appeared to remind an observer of countless lotus flowers that had been used to decorate the windows and balconies of homes in preparation for welcoming the royal procession. While the faces of these pretty women were like lotus flowers, the aroma of the herbal drinks they had drunk was like the fragrance emanating from the lotuses, and their blinking eyes and the movement of eyelashes were like so many bees, who were attracted by the aroma of the flowers, hovering over these lotuses in search of nectar.

Verse no. 12:

ता राघवम् दृष्टिभिरापिबन्त्यो नार्यो न जग्मुर्विषयान्तराणि।
तथा हि शेषेन्द्रियवृत्तिरासाम् सर्वात्मना चक्षुरिव प्रविष्टा॥ ७-१२

tā rāghavam drṣṭibhirāpibantyo nāryo na jagmurviṣayāntarāṇi |
tathā hi śeṣendriyavṛttirāsām sarvātmanā cakṣuriva praviṣṭā || 7-12

7-12. These ladies were gazing at prince Aja intensely, without moving their eyes from him. They looked at the prince steadily and were so much enamoured of him that they

forgot about anything else. It seemed that all their other organs were either paralysed, or were cooperating with the eye to help the ladies enjoy the sight of prince Aja undisturbed.

[Note--As the royal procession passed by the windows and balconies, the ladies who had packed them gazed at prince Aja so intensely that they were like statues. All their organs became numb, and it seemed that these organs were helping the mind to remain focussed on the prince by not disturbing it with their individual demands.]

{The following three verses narrate the private conversation that took place between assembled womenfolk who had crowded the windows and balconies to have a look at prince Aja and princess Indumati as the royal procession was wending its way from the venue of the Swayambar ceremony to the royal palace of Indumati's brother, king Bhoj. They appreciated Indumati's choice of having a Swayambar arranged for her so that she herself could choose her husband from a wide choice she would have.}

स्थाने वृता भूपतिभिः परोक्षैः स्वयंवरम् साधुममंस्त भोज्या।

पद्मेव नारायणमन्यथासौ लभेत कान्तम् कथमात्मतुल्यम्॥ ७-१३

sthāne vṛtā bhūpatibhiḥ parokṣaiḥ svayaṁvaram sādhumamaṁsta bhojyā |
padmeva nārāyaṇamanyathāsau labheta kāntam kathamātmatulyam || 7-13

7-13. The women-folk talked about the event and said to each other: "Many kings and princes had sent their individual proposals to marry princess Indumati who was king Bhoja's sister (bhojyā). But she preferred to have a Swayambar¹ organised for her so that she can make a selection as to who she would like to be her husband from a wide choice of suitors. Indeed she was right in this decision, for otherwise how could she have come face to face with prince Aja² and select him as the best bridegroom, a person who would be compatible with her and fit to become her husband, just like Lord Vishnu and goddess Laxmi are extremely compatible with each other and form a distinguished heavenly couple."

[Note—¹The 'Swayambar' is a tradition wherein the princess is free to select her suitor from a wide choice of princes and kings who assemble at the venue and vie with each other to attract the princess' attention, doing their best and putting up their most charming appearance to enthuse the princess and entice her to select one of them as her husband. Whomsoever the princess selects, she puts a garland around his neck to indicate her choice. While the princess moves down the row of kings and princes, she is accompanied by her trusted maids and other female aides who have been previously briefed about the qualities and achievements of all competing suitors. So they briefly tell the princess about the person before her so that she can make an informed choice.

There are two standard formats for the Swayambar. In one format, the princess herself moves down the row of assembled competing kings and princes to make her choice. Once she decides on a particular person, she puts a garland around his neck to indicate her choice. This format was used during the Swayambar of Indumati as described here in the present verses of Raghuvansham of Kalidas.

This process of the bride choosing her own bridegroom during a Swayambar was also followed in the case of Laxmi and Lord Vishnu. This story is narrated in (i) Vishnu Puran, Chapter 9; and (ii) Srimad Bhagwat Puran, Amrit Manthan, Book 8, Chapter 8, verse nos. 17-23.

In the second format, the father or the guardian of the princess declares a condition before the Swayambar is held, so that any competitor who fulfils that condition becomes eligible to marry the princess. This format was used during the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita. In this case, Sita' father king Janak set a condition that anyone who could lift and break an ancient bow said to belong to Lord Shiva would marry his daughter. None of the assembled kings and princes could do that. Finally, Lord Ram fulfilled this condition, paving the way of his marriage with Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210; (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 239--to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no.240; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.}

As is abundantly obvious, the princess has no choice of her own in the second format, while she is free to select her future partner in the first format.

²It ought to be remembered here that prince Aja was the grandfather of Lord Ram.]

Verse no. 14:

परस्परेण स्पृहणीयशोभम् न चेदिदम् द्वन्द्वमयोजयिष्यत्।
अस्मिन्द्वये रूपविधानयत्नः पत्युः प्रजानाम् वितथोऽभविष्यत्॥ ७-१४

paraspareṇa spṛhaṇīyaśobham na ceditam dvandvamayojayīṣyat |
asmindvaye rūpavidhānayatnaḥ patyuh prajānām vitatho'bhaṣyat || 7-14

7-14. Had the creator Brahma not united this couple of unique charm, then all his efforts to create beauty in his creation would have been a fruitless effort.

[Note--To draw a parallel, we can take an example of two military powers joining hands, the result of which is a formidable alliance that becomes invincible and most lethal in the battle-field. No enemy would dare to challenge them. No matter how powerful these two partners are independently, but joining hands multiplies their strength, punch, abilities and powers manifold times.

Another simple example is that of a room illuminated by lamps. When two lamps are simultaneously used to illuminate the room, then obviously the room would be more brightly lit as compared to the situation when only one lamp is used.

So likewise, though princess Indumati and prince Aja had their own independent charms, but when they were united in marriage, their magnificence and grandeur multiplied exponentially to fade all other competition.]

Verse no. 15:

रतिस्मरौ नूनमिमावभूताम् राज्ञाम् सहस्रेषु तथा हि बाला।
गतेयमात्मप्रतिरूपमेव मनो हि जन्मान्तरसंगतिज्ञम्॥ ७-१५

ratismarau nūnamimāvabhūtām rājñām sahasreṣu tathā hi bālā |
gateyamātmaprati rūpameva mano hi janmāntarasangati jñam || 7-15

7-15. It is for sure that in their previous lives, they must have been Kamdeo and his consort Rati. This is the probable reason why Indumati unhesitatingly decided to wed prince Aja from amongst the hundreds of competitors, because the heart and the sub-conscious mind of a person can remember its experiences of the past and the interaction that the person had with the other person, no matter how distant in time of the past such an interaction had taken place.

[Note--Kamdeo is the patron deity of passion, beauty and charm, and Rati is his consort. Here, prince Aja is compared to Kamdeo, and princess Indumati to Rati.

This phenomenon is called the 'voice of the heart', or 'the inner call'. When two persons meet, there are instances of them establishing instant rapport even though they may have met for the first time in their lives. On the opposite side of the spectrum is the instance of people who have been in contact for a long time and had even lived together for a long time, yet they can't see eye-to-eye, and remain incompatible with each other.

In the case of Aja and Indumati, it was the case of love at first sight. There is no explanation as to what brought this about except that the frequency of their hearts began to resonate harmoniously and the sub-conscious aspect of their minds developed a sync as soon as they came in contact with each other.]

Verse no. 16:

इत्युदगताः पौरवधूमुखेभ्यः शृण्वन्कथाः श्रोत्रसुखाः कुमारः।
उद्भासितम् मङ्गलसंविधाभिः संबन्धिनः सद्यः समाससाद॥ ७-१६

ityudgatāḥ pauravadhūmukhebhyaḥ śṛṇvankathāḥ śrotrasukhāḥ kumārāḥ |
udbhāsitam maṅgalasaṁvidhābhiḥ saṁbandhinaḥ sadyaḥ samāsaśāda || 7-16

7-16. In this way, hearing such ear-pleasing words uttered by the citizens, prince Aja reached the royal palace of his would-be father-in-law, king Bhoj of Vidharva. The palace was brightly illuminated and had already been decorated in multifarious way to welcome the procession. Auspicious articles and materials needed for the official ritual to formalise the alliance between Aja and Indumati were ready.

Verse no. 17:

ततोऽवतीर्याशु करेणुकायाः स कामरूपेश्वरदत्तहस्तः।
वैदर्भनिर्दिष्टमथो विवेश नारीमनांसीव चतुष्कमन्तः॥ ७-१७

tato'vatīryāśu kareṇukāyāḥ sa kāmārūpeśvaradattahastah |
vaidarbhanirdiṣṭamatho viveśa nārīmanāṁsīva catuṣkamantaḥ || 7-17

7-17. When he reached the royal palace of king Bhoj, prince Aja held the hand of (his friend) the prince of Kamrup (a princely state in north-east, known as Kamaksha; the present-day state of Assam in India) to get down from the elephant on which he was brought ceremoniously inside the city.

[Note--This verse shows that some of the princes in the assembly were actually friendly towards prince Aja. One such prince was of the kingdom of Kamrup who accompanied prince Aja as his companion to the venue where the final marriage ceremony was to be held. The prince of Kamrup played the role of a 'best man' or the 'best friend' during the marriage rituals. He helped prince Aja through the different processes, and held his marriage ring for him. A 'best man' stands next to the groom during the ceremony to assist him during the performance of the rituals. Such a companion of the groom is also called the 'groomsman' or an 'usher'. While the groom is engaged in the formalities of the ritual, his best friend attends to his guests.]

Verse no. 18:

महार्हसिंहासनसंस्थितोऽसौ सरत्नमर्घ्यम् मधुपर्कमिश्रम्।
भोजोपनीतम् च दुकूलयुग्मम् जग्राह सार्धम् वनिताकटाक्षैः॥ ७-१८

mahārhasimhāsanasaṁsthito'sau saratnamarghyam madhuparkamiśram |
bhojopanītam ca dukūlayugmam jagrāha sārdham vanitākāṭākṣaiḥ || 7-18

7-18. At the palace, king Bhoj sat his son-in-law, prince Aja, on a magnificent throne. He then offered Aja priceless gems, a sweet-dish made of honey, and two pieces of silk robes as a formal welcome gesture shown to honourable guests. Prince Aja gracefully accepted these offerings even as all the women-folk had their eyes riveted on him.

Verse no. 19:

दुकूलवासाः स वधूसमीपम् निन्ये विनीतैरवारोदरक्षैः।
वेलासकाशम् स्फुटफेनराजिर्नवैरुदन्वानिव चन्द्रपादैः॥ ७-१९

dukūlavāsāḥ sa vadhūsamīpam ninye vinītaiavarodharakṣaiḥ |
velāsakāśam sphuṭaphenarājir navairudanvāniva candrapādaiḥ || 7-19

7-19. Even as the brilliant rays of the full moon raise the ocean and help its waves to reach the land beyond its normal coastline, so was the case of the royal heralds wearing silk robes who escorted prince Aja to princess Indumati.

[Note--Under normal circumstances and royal protocol, an outsider not belonging to the royal family was not allowed to enter the palace to meet female members of the royal household. Till the time the marriage was not formalised, prince Aja was an 'outsider', someone who did not officially belong to the royal family of king Bhoj. And even after marriage, protocol still had to be observed because it was a tradition that males refrained from entering the female chambers without an escort.]

Verse no. 20:

**तत्रार्चितो भोजपतेः पुरोधा हुत्वाग्निमाज्यादिभिरग्निकल्पः।
तमेव चाधाय विवाहसाक्ष्ये वधूवरौ संगमयांचकार॥ ७-२०**

tatrārcito bhojapateḥ purodhā hutvāgnimājyādibhiragnikalpaḥ |
tameva cādhāya vivāhasākṣye vadhūvarau saṅgamayāṁcakāra || 7-20

7-20. At the venue of the marriage rituals, the chief priest of king Bhoj, the king who was known for his good deeds and was as pure as a fire, formalised the marriage alliance between prince Aja and princess Indumati by lighting the sacred fire and offering clarified butter to it as part of the Vedic ritual, making the fire a witness to this marriage.

[Note--The 'fire' is regarded as the purifying element, as it burns all impurities. In Vedic rituals, the sacred fire is believed to represent the fire-god himself, and it is made a witness because the fire cannot allow untruth to survive because all forms of falsehoods are considered impure, which the fire would burn.]

Verse no. 21:

**हस्तेन हस्तम् परिगृह्य वध्वाः स राजसूनुः सुतराम् चकासे।
अनन्तराशोकलताप्रवालम् प्राप्येव चूतः प्रतिपल्लवेन॥ ७-२१**

hastena hastam parigrhya vadhvāḥ sa rājasūnuḥ sutarām cakāse |
anantarāśokalatāpravālam prāpyeva cūtaḥ pratipallavena || 7-21

7-21. Even as a mango tree (the Mangifera Indica tree) with its dark green leaves looks magnificent when it extends its branches so that its leaves touch the leaves of a neighbouring ashoka tree (the Saraca Indica tree) with its dark-brown or copper coloured leaves, thereby symbolising a natural bond forged by Mother Nature, so was the case of prince Aja standing close to princess Indumati and holding her hand as the couple looked most glorious and beautiful as if this union was ordained by Destiny itself.

[Note--Here, prince Aja is likened to the mango tree, while princess Indumati to the ashoka tree. The word 'ashoka' literally means one that removes sorrows, hence this word is used for Indumati because by her being with prince Aja and standing by his side provided the latter with unbound joy and happiness.]

Verse no. 22:

**आसीद्वरः कण्टकितप्रकोष्ठः स्विन्नाङ्गुलिः संववृते कुमारी।
तस्मिन्द्वये तत्क्षणमात्मवृत्तिः समम् विभक्तेव मनोभवेन॥ ७-२२**

āsīdvaraḥ kaṇṭakitapraakoṣṭhaḥ svinnāṅguliḥ saṁvavṛte kumārī |
tasmindvaye tatkṣaṇamātmavṛttiḥ samam vibhakteva manobhavana || 7-22

7-22. When prince Aja held the hand of princess Indumati, his hands felt a wave of thrill passing through them (like an electric current), while Indumati's fingers became wet with sweat because of her excitement. At that time it seemed that Kamdeo, the patron deity of love and passion, had blessed the couple with emotions of mutual love for each other in equal terms (because both of them became emotional and nervous as they held each other's hands for the first time).

Verse no. 23:

**तयोरपाङ्गप्रतिसारितानि क्रियासमापत्तिनिवर्तितानि।
हीयन्त्रणामानशिरे मनोज्ञामन्योन्यलोलानि विलोचनानि॥ ७-२३**

tayorapāṅgapratīsāritāni kriyāsamāpattinivartitāni |
hīyantraṇāmānaśīre manojñā manyonyalolāni vilocanāni || 7-23

7-23. Both of them (i.e. prince Aja and his bride princess Indumati) repeatedly glanced at each other shyly, but as soon as their eyes met they (smiled imperceptibly and) looked away. This bashful look and its attendant physical manifestation as nervousness, thrill and sweating made all those who were observing the couple become overjoyed.

Verse no. 24:

**प्रदक्षिणप्रक्रमणात्कृशानोरुदर्चिषस्तन्मिथुनम् चकाशे।
मेरोरुपान्तेष्विव वर्तमानमन्योन्यसंसक्तमहस्त्रियामम्॥ ७-२४**

pradakṣiṇaparakramaṇātkṛśānor udarciṣastanmithunam cakāśe |
merorupānteṣviva vartamānam anyonyasamsaktamahastriyāmam || 7-24

7-24. When prince Aja and princess Indumati were going around the sacred fire during the course of the marriage rituals, it appeared that the day and the night were circling Mt. Sumeru (the fabled golden mountain in heaven), one behind the other.

[Note--As part of Hindu marriage rituals, the groom and the bride circle the fire pit, one behind the other. The couple circumambulate or go around the fire in a circle seven times to officially formalise and declare their union. During circling the fire, the bride and bridegroom exchange vows seven times so as to ensure that they don't have doubts about what they are saying.

Mt. Sumeru is a mountain of gold, and it is compared to the fire here because the flame of a burning fire is of a golden colour. Since the groom and the bride follow each other in circling the sacred fire, this ritual is compared to the day and the night following each other as the sun goes around the summit of Mt. Sumeru, causing day light and night one after the other in a constant cycle.]

Verse no. 25:

नितम्बगुर्वी गुरुणा प्रयुक्ता वधूर्विधातृप्रतिमेन तेन।

चकार सा मत्तचकोरनेत्रा लज्जावती लाजविसर्गमग्नौ॥ ७-२५

nitambagurvī guruṇā prayuktā vadhūrvidhātṛpratimena tena |
cakāra sā mattacakoranetrā lajjāvatī lājavisargamagnau || 7-25

7-25. Princess Indumati, who had broad hips and flickering eyes that had turned red like those of the Chakor bird due to the overwhelming excitement she was experiencing, offered dried grain (particularly puffed rice) to the sacred fire as advised by the presiding priest who is believed to represent the creator Brahma during the performance of a fire ritual ceremony.

[Note--The bird Chakor is the Indian red-legged partridge, and it is reputed to be so enamoured of the moon that on the full moon night it continuously stares at the moon and turns its head gradually as the moon traverses across the sky during the night. This metaphor is employed by poets to show the condition of a true lover, for the lover would think of nothing else but the object of his or her love. Here, the comparison of Indumati's eyes with those of Chakor's implies that her eyes were fixed on prince Aja with whom she had fallen deeply in love.

Ancient Indian poets use certain metaphors, analogues terms and metrics to describe the physical beauty of the feminine form. Two examples are given here--one is that of the red-coloured eye of the Chakor bird, and the other is of the broad hip.]

Verse no. 26:

हविःशमीपल्लवलाजगन्धी पुण्यः कृशानोरुदियाय धूमः।

कपोलसंसर्पिशिखः स तस्या मुहूर्तकर्णोत्पलताम् प्रपेदे॥ ७-२६

haviḥśamīpallavalājagandhī puṇyaḥ kṛśānorudiyāya dhūmah |
kapolasamśarpīśikhaḥ sa tasyā muhūrtakarṇotpalatām prapede || 7-26

7-26. When the smoke arising from the sacred fire in which clarified butter, leaves of the shami tree and puffed rice grains had been offered as part of the marriage ritual, swirled around the face of the fair-complexioned princess Indumati, it gave the impression that she was wearing large ear-rings made of blue lotus flowers.

[Note--The botanical name of the Shami tree is *Prosopis cineraria*. It is also called Khejri tree, and it is native to arid regions of Asia. It is a moderate-sized, evergreen, sacred tree, which is drought-resistant, and hence regarded as a symbol of resilience. It is said to bring good luck and prosperity.

The comparison to the colour of the lotus flower clearly implies that this smoke was not black but had a bluish tinge. This instance is an example of the beauty of Kalidas' writing: he has used the example of the lotus flower to highlight the colour of the smoke rising up from the sacred fire. The smoke formed large circles around Indumati's face, which is why it is said that when viewed from a little distance it gave the impression that she was wearing ear-rings made of large lotus flowers.]

Verse no. 27:

तदञ्जनक्लेदसमाकुलाक्षम् प्रम्लानबीजाङ्कुरकर्णपूरम्।
वधूमुखम् पाटलगन्धलेखमाचारधूमग्रहणाद्बभूव॥ ७-२७

tadañjanakledasamākulākṣam pramlānabījāṅkurakarṇapūram |
vadhūmukham pāṭalagandhalekham ācāradhūmagrahaṇādbabhūva || 7-27

7-27. The hot smoke arising from the sacred fire pit of the marriage ceremony irritated the eyes of Indumati so much so that tears mixed with ointment she had applied on her eyelashes began flowing onto her cheeks, the flower buds she wore as ear-decorations began to dry up, and her cheeks became flushed red.

Verse no. 28:

तौ स्नातकैर्बन्धुमता च राजा पुरंधिभिश्च क्रमशः प्रयुक्तम्।
कन्याकुमारौ कनकासनस्थावार्द्राक्षतारोपणमन्वभूताम्॥ ७-२८

tau snātakairbandhumatā ca rājā purandhibhiśca kramaśaḥ prayuktaṁ |
kanyākumārau kanakāsanasthāvār drākṣatāropaṇamanvabhūtām || 7-28

7-28. While the newly wed couple, Indumati and Aja, sat on a golden throne, wet rice grains were sprinkled over them as a token of blessing by king Bhoj along with his family members and other senior members of the royal court, as well as many senior ladies of

reputed families of the city, ladies who were married, had children, and were honourable in everyway.

[Note--When it is said that women of reputed families of the city who were married and had children sprinkled wet rice grains on the couple it means that everyone was not allowed to come close to the throne, but only selected senior female members of the community, who were aware of royal protocols, were allowed to sprinkle grains on the newly wed couple on behalf of the rest of the community in order to maintain decorum and protocol. Otherwise, there would have been an unmanageable crowd resulting in chaos.]

Verse no. 29:

इति स्वसुर्भोजकुलप्रदीपः संपाद्य पाणिग्रहणम् स राजा।
महीपतीनाम् पृथगर्हणार्थम् समादिदेशाधिकृतानधिः॥ ७-२९

iti svasurbhojakulapradīpaḥ saṁpādya pāṇigrahaṇam sa rājā |
mahīpatīnām pṛthagarhaṇārtham samādideśādhikṛtānadhīḥ || 7-29

7-29. In this way, after having completed the marriage rituals of his sister Indumati with prince Aja, the highly prosperous and wealthy king Bhoj instructed his ministers to individually visit the camps of all other princes who had come to participate in the Swyambar ceremony, pay them respects on his behalf, and then bid them farewell with gifts and presents.

Verse no. 30:

लिङ्गैर्मुदः संवृतविक्रियास्ते हृदाः प्रसन्ना इव गूढनक्राः।
वैदर्भमामन्त्र्य ययुस्तदीयाम् प्रत्यर्प्य पूजामुपदाछलेन॥ ७-३०

liṅgairmudaḥ saṁvṛtavikriyāste hradāḥ prasannā iva gūḍhanakrāḥ |
vaidarbhamaṁmantrya yayustadīyām pratyarpya pūjāmupadāchalena || 7-30

7-30. The princes who had failed to marry Indamati harboured severe jealousy and a secret desire for revenge in their hearts. Just like a lake looks calm and clean on the surface although there are countless ferocious aquatic animals (such as alligators) present in its water below the surface, so likewise these frustrated princes looked calm on the outside, but they were seething with anger internally.

So therefore, when their host, king Bhoj, presented them with gifts at the time of their departure, all of them politely returned these gifts with something added as a return gift from their sides for king Bhoj.

[Note--The princes rebuked king Bhoj by politely refusing to accept gifts from him, and in order to maintain a semblance of courtesy they added something from their own sides as a counter gift to the host.]

Verse no. 31:

**स राजलोकः कृतपूर्वसंविदारम्भसिद्धौ समयोपलभ्यम्।
आदास्यमानः प्रमदामिषम् तदावृत्य पन्थानमजस्य तस्थौ॥ ७-३१**

sa rājaloḥaḥ kṛtapūrvasaṁvidārambhā siddhau samayopalabhyam |
ādāsyamānaḥ pramadāmiṣam tadāvṛtya panthānamajasya tasthau || 7-31

7-31. The frustrated princes had conspired to lay a trap and snatch Indumati from prince Aja by suddenly surrounding him from all sides on the road. So when they exited the city, they sat in ambush on the path that the couple, princess Indumati and her husband prince Aja, would take to go home to their own kingdom.

Verse no. 32:

**भर्तापि तावत्क्रथकैशिकानामनुष्ठितानन्तरजाविवाहः।
सत्त्वानुरूपाहरणीकृतश्रीः प्रास्थापयद्राघवमन्वगाच्च॥ ७-३२**

bhartāpi tāvatkrathakaiśikānām anuṣṭhitānantarajāvivāhaḥ |
sattvānurūpāharaṇīkṛtāśrīḥ prāsthāpayadrāghavamanvagācca || 7-32

7-32. Meanwhile, having completed the marriage ritual of his younger sister Indumati, king Bhoj magnanimously presented adequate marriage gifts (dowry) to her in accordance with his wealth. Then when the couple's royal entourage left for the groom's kingdom, king Bhoj accompanied them for some distance to bid them farewell.

[Note--According to custom and Hindu law, the dowry given by the parents of a newly wed bride becomes her personal property. This tradition primarily aims to provide financial security to the woman.]

Verse no. 33:

**तिस्रस्त्रिलोकप्रथितेन सार्धमजेन मार्गे वसतीरुषित्वा।
तस्मादपावर्तत कुण्डिनेशः पर्वत्यये सोम इवोष्णरश्मेः॥ ७-३३**

tisrastrilokaprathitena sārddham ajena mārgē vasatīruṣitvā |
tasmādapāvartata kuṇḍīneśaḥ parvātyaye soma ivoṣṇaraśmēḥ || 7-33

7-33. Just like the case of the moon moving away from the sun after remaining aligned with it for three consecutive nights of the dark phase of the moon (one night prior to and one night following the dark moon night), so likewise king Bhoj of Vidharva stayed close to the newly wed couple, his sister Indumati and his son-in-law prince Aja, for three days and then returned back to his capital city.

[Note--The moon is lighted by the sunlight. During the dark night of the moon, the moon, the earth and the sun are so aligned that the moon rises and sets with the sun, thereby remaining invisible from the earth. Its side that is lighted by the sunlight is directly opposite to the earth, and only the side that is dark faces the earth, which means the moon becomes invisible. From the next day, the moon moves gradually away from this alignment, making a thin sliver of its surface visible from earth on the first night which gradually develops into a full bright disc when the moon is opposite to the sun on the fifteenth night.

The process is reversed from the night following the full moon night, till it ends with the moon becoming dark roughly fourteen to fifteen days after the full moon night.]

Verse no. 34:

**प्रमन्यवः प्रागपि कोसलेन्द्र प्रत्येकमात्तस्वतया बभूवुः ।
अतो नृपाश्चक्षमिरे समेताः स्त्रीरत्नलाभं न तदात्मजस्य ॥३४॥**

pramanyavaḥ prāgapi kosalendra pratyekamāttasvatayā babhūvuḥ ।
ato nṛpāścakṣamire sametāḥ strīratnalābhaṁ na tadātmajasya ॥34॥

7-34. Earlier, king Raghu, the father of Aja, had confiscated the wealth of all the kings and subdued them during his campaign, known as 'Digvijay', to conquer the world at the time of performance of a 'horse sacrifice'. So these kings had harboured a universal dislike for him, and a subtle desire for vengeance against the family of Raghu. For this reason, all the princes who had gathered in the Swayamvar held for the marriage of Indumati could not tolerate that Aja, the son of Raghu against whom all of them harboured a grudge, should so easily take away the princess as a trophy in their presence. They were filled with envy and rallied against him to square up and seek retribution for the insult they had been subjected to in the hands of his father.

They started grumbling, and decided to join hands against Aja and prevent him from taking away Indumati so easily.

[Note--It will be recalled at this juncture that Aja's father, king Raghu, had earlier subdued all the great kings during his military campaign known as 'Digvijay', and had extracted heavy tax from them in the form of tributes to let them off (instead of annexing their kingdoms right away). Refer: Canto 4 of this book 'Raghuvansham'.

It is obvious naturally then that all the princes who had failed the test at the Swayambar of Indumati had already harboured jealousy and animosity against the kingdom to which prince Aja belonged. This ill-will was further stoked when they felt they were humiliated purposely by king Bhoj who had already made up his mind to

marry his sister Indumati to the son of king Raghu, and had invited them all just to publicly humiliate them on the pretext of a self-choosing marriage ceremony of his sister. Since all these princes had a biased mind, they concluded that king Bhoj had done so at the behest of king Raghu himself to cause further embarrassment to all the kings and princes of the kingdoms subdued by him earlier.

This is why the assembled princes could not tolerate that king Raghu's son, prince Aja, would marry a princess so easily, subjecting them all to public humiliation and make a joke of the entire process of the Swayambar ceremony.

The princes were quite certain that this entire Swayambar ceremony was fake, and it was arranged just to humiliate and insult them. It has been described earlier in Canto 6 that Indumati had paid no attention at all to any of the competitors when she passed them one by one with her trusted maid accompanying her and briefing her about the achievements and qualities of each of the princes. She hadn't even looked twice at the prince in front of her, and moved away after a short stay in a formal manner. But when she arrived at prince Aja, she took not more than a moment to put the victory garland around his neck as if she had already made up her mind whom to choose as her bridegroom even before she stepped down from her platform to make the rounds and come face to face with the assembled suitors. The usual practice was that the princess would make two rounds of the assembled suitors--During the first round, she would closely look up the individual prince and get acquainted with his qualities and achievements, as well as his personality, charm and youthfulness in order to narrow down her choice to one or two of them. Then in the second round, after she had discussed the matter with her trusted companions during the interval between the two rounds, she would put the victory garland on the prince of her choice. But in this case, Indumati had quickly moved from one suitor prince to another, and when she came to Aja she immediately put the garland on him. Her maid had even asked her to see other suitors before making a decision, but she refused--refer: Canto 6, verse no. 82 which endorses this statement.

These princes therefore argued amongst themselves that king Bhoj had already decided to marry his sister to prince Aja and had briefed her about it. This being the case, what was the need to have called them all to attend a Swayambar ceremony if it was not done to subject them to humiliation and ridicule? This thought infuriated the princes who conspired to take revenge.]

Verse no. 35:

तमुद्वहन्तम् पथि भोजकन्याम् रुरोध राजन्यगण स दृप्तः।

बलिप्रदिष्टाम् श्रियमाददानम् त्रैविक्रमम् पादमिवेन्द्रशत्रुः॥ ७-३५

tamudvahantam pathi bhojakanyām rurodha rājanyagaṇa sa dr̥ptaḥ |

balipradiṣṭām śriyamādadānam traivikramam pādāmivendraśatruḥ || 7-35

7-35. So therefore, these princes intercepted (or ambushed) prince Aja as he was taking the sister of king of Bhoj (i.e. Indumati) to his own city, just like the case of Prahalad¹, who was an enemy of Indra, blocking Trivikram (i.e. Lord Vaaman who was Lord

Vishnu in the form of a mendicant of a diminutive size, a dwarf) when the latter was about to measure the entire world, including the heaven, the earth and the nether world with his three gigantic steps at the time when king Bali had agreed to give Vaaman space measuring three steps which the latter had desired by way of alms that one would give to a Brahmin mendicant during the process of doing a fire sacrifice.

[Note—¹Prahalad was a great Asura king (non-god; literally a demon-like person). He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. He was the son of an evil Asura (a non-god, or an evil, pervert and demonic person) known as Hiranyakashipu. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. This devotion for the great god was disliked by his father who began tormenting the child. It came to such a head that Vishnu had to intervene and kill Hiranyakashipu by assuming a half-lion and half-man form. After his father's death, Prahalad ascended the throne of the Asura kingdom, and became more powerful than his father. Being primarily an Asura who were inherently opposed to the Gods of heaven, Prahalad conquered heaven during his campaign to conquer the three worlds consisting of the heaven, the earth and the nether world.

Since Prahalad was basically an Asura, Indra, who was the king of gods, was against him. When Prahalad conquered heaven, it obviously meant he defeated Indra, who began to harbour deep ill-will against him. Indra ran away from heaven. But to take revenge, Indra disguised himself as Brahmin and sought an audience with Prahalad, asking the latter to teach him principles of Dharma. Pleased with Indra's quest, Prahalad asked him to seek a boon, at which Indra cunningly sought the king's virtue as a gift. Since Prahalad was committed to grant the boon, he transferred all his good virtues and righteousness to Indra. This resulted in Prahalad losing his moral high-ground, and sank into the abyss of evil so characteristic of the demon race.

Prahalad's son was Virochan, and the latter was the father of Bali. Bali was therefore the grandson of Prahalad. The gods had got Virochan killed by taking advantage of his generosity. Prahalad raised his grandson Bali. So, when Vishnu as Trivikram tricked Bali to grant him land measuring three steps, and in the process when Vishnu started measuring the entire creation in his gigantic steps, Prahalad became annoyed as he remembered how the gods had deceived his son Virochan. Hence, he intervened and tried to stop Vaaman from measuring the entire creation. But when Prahalad realised that Vaaman was none other than his respected Vishnu, he relented. Vishnu was pleased, and he granted Prahalad and his grandson Bali the kingdom of the Sutala Loka, i.e. the nether world, which was spared by Trivikram when Prahalad had intervened to stop Vaaman from measuring the entire creation.]

Verse no. 36:

तस्याः स रक्षार्थमनल्पयोधमादिश्य पित्र्यम् सचिवम् कुमारः।

प्रत्यग्रहीत्पार्थिववाहिनीम् ताम् भागीरथीम् शोण इवोत्तरङ्गः॥ ७-३६

tasyāḥ sa rakṣārthamanalpayodhamādīśya pitryam sacivam kumāraḥ |
pratyagrahītpārthivavāhinīm tām bhāgīrathīm śoṇa ivottaraṅgaḥ || 7-36

7-36. Prince Aja put Indumati in the safe custody of trusted ministers and attendants who had long served under his father king Raghu and were the latter's confidantes, and then he himself stood to block the joint army of his adversaries just like the hills of Sonbhadra region block the flow of swift currents of the tributaries of river Ganges.

[Note--Sonbhadra is a district in central India in the state of Uttar Pradesh. This terrain has uneven big and small rocky hills as well as dense forests that impede the smooth flow of the river's tributaries, known as Son, Rihand and Belan rivers that ultimately feed into river Ganges. The range of hills here are associated with the Kaimur Range and is part of the north-eastern extension of the Vindhya mountain range, acting as a transition point between Kaimur range and the Deccan plateau. Some of the prominent hills are called Markundi, Mangleshwar and Mahadav hills. There is a big dam called Rihand dam here. It also has many waterfalls.

The idea is that just like the hills of Sonbhadra region block the flow of the tributaries of river Ganges, so likewise prince Aja stood to face the many army contingents of opposing princes.]

{The following verses vividly describe the ferocious, blood-curdling, and most horrifying battle that ensued between the forces of prince Aja and those of the other jealous princes who had conspired against the former and had waited in ambush with the intent to either capture Aja or slay him outright, and snatch his bride Indumati from him, because they were of an unanimous view that the marriage ceremony called 'Swayambar' was a farce, that they had been cheated and dishonoured by a conspiracy between king Raghu, the father of Aja, and king Bhoj, the host. So they wanted to settle their grievances by use of force and arms.}

Verse no. 37:

पत्तिः पदातिम् रथिनम् रथेशस्तुरंगसादी तुरगाधिरूढम्।

यन्ता गजस्याभ्यपतद्गजस्थम् तुल्यप्रतिद्वन्द्वि बभूव युद्धम्॥ ७-३७

pattiḥ padātim rathinam ratheśas turaṁgasādī turagādhirūḍham |

yantā gajasyābhyapatadgajastham tulyapratidvandvi babhūva yuddham ||

7-37

7-37. A fierce no-holds barred battle began between the opposing forces--one was prince Aja's force, and the other was a combined force of all the princes who had conspired to ambush Aja to settle scores with him in what they perceived as a deceitful marriage ceremony in which the bride's father had already decided with whom to marry princess Indumati, and had, in consultation with the groom's father, king Raghu, invited all the other princes of the realm just to insult and humiliate them publicly.

In the fierce battle that ensued, infantry soldiers of the two sides clashed with each other, and so did the other wings of the two armies, such as the chariots, the cavalry and the elephants clashed head-on with each other. In this way, a ferocious battle

unfolded between the two sides who matched each other in strength, courage, force, equipments of battle and arms.

Verse no. 38:

**नदत्सु तूर्येष्वविभाव्यवाचो नोदीरयन्ति स्म कुलोपदेशान्।
बाणाक्षरैरेव परस्परस्य नामोर्जितम् चापभृतः शशंसुः॥ ७-३८**

nadatsu tūryeṣvavibhāvyaavāco nodīrayanti sma kulopadeśān |
bāṇākṣarairēva parasparasya nāmorjitam cāpabhṛtaḥ śaśaṁsuḥ || 7-38

7-38. The war trumpets were blaring so loudly, and to this was added the cacophony created by yelling soldiers, neighing horses, trumpeting elephants, and the clanking of wheels of the chariots, that nothing else was audible. The two adversaries could not identify with whom they were fighting in the midst of this din, and the only way to know who the opponent was by way of the names engraved on the shaft of spears and arrows (as well as emblems, coat-of-arms, flags, and other kinds of insignias) that the eyes could see.

Verse no. 39:

**उत्थापितः संयति रेणुरश्वैः सान्द्रीकृतः स्यन्दनवंशचक्रैः।
विस्तारितः कुञ्जरकर्णतालैर्नेत्रक्रमेणोपरुरोध सूर्यम्॥ ७-३९**

utthāpitaḥ saṁyati reṇuraśvaiḥ sāndrīkṛtaḥ syandanavaṁśacakraiḥ |
vistāritaḥ kuñjarakarnaṭālair netrakrameṇoparurodha sūryam || 7-39

7-39. The dust raised by the hooves of charging horses and the wheels of rapidly moving chariots was fanned in all the directions by the large fan-like ears of elephants so much so that the sky was covered with a thick veil of dust as if a dark shroud had been spread over the battle-field to obscure the sun and its light.

[Note--Though it was an ordinary bright sunny day, but the sun was obscured from view by the thick blanket of dust raised from the ground by the two fighting forces, thereby creating an impression of either an evening or a solar eclipse.

Wars are not for the faint-hearted--the very thought of such a scenario would send a cold chill down the spine of an ordinary person. The blood, of both men and animals, that was spilled on the battle-field, and the corpses that lay scattered on the ground, with vultures alighting on them to tear out their entrails, and the devastation that lay all around, such as broken chariots, spears, torn flags, shields and arms of various denominations that lay scattered all around, and the accompanying stink and groans of those who had still not died but lay wounded on the ground in wars of ancient times, when the two opposing forces clashed face-to-face with each other, is very gut-churning.]

Verse no. 40:

मत्स्यध्वजा वायुवशाद्विदीर्णैर्मुखैः प्रवृद्धध्वजिनीरजांसि।

बभ्रुः पिबन्तः परमार्थमत्स्याः पर्याविलानीव नवोदकानि॥ ७-४०

matsyadhvajā vāyuvśādvīdīrṇairmukhaiḥ pravṛddhadhvajinīrajāṁsi |
babhuḥ pibantaḥ paramārthamatsyāḥ paryāvilānīva navodakāni || 7-40

7-40. The flags atop the chariots as well as on long poles or spears held by foot soldiers had the shape of fish. In the wind that blew, these flags fluttered so wildly that it gave the impression that real-life fish, thirsty for water, had opened their mouths at the first sight of dirt-laden clouds that precede the actual arrival of rain, in the hope that they would get some drops of water, even if dirty, that may fall from the dusty cloud overhead.

[Note--We have just read that the dust raised in the battle-field created a thick blanket of cloud in the sky that obscured the sun. It is ordinarily observed that after a spell of dry and hot summer days, lakes and ponds dry up and fish yearn for water. Before the arrival of the actual rain-bearing clouds, a dust storm is raised, and the fish erroneously think that the rain is about to fall. So they open their mouth in the hope of a few drops of rain-water falling in their parched mouths. But instead of drops of rain-water, what they get is dust.

Just like the case of countless fish opening their mouths when they see the dusty cloud overhead in the belief that they contain rain, so was the case in this battle when countless fish-shaped flags fluttered in the dusty environment in the hope of victory.]

Verse no. 41:

रथो रथाङ्गध्वनिना विजज्ञे विलोलघण्टाक्वणितेन नागः।

स्वभर्तुनामग्रहणाद्बभूव सान्द्रे रजस्यात्मपरावबोधः॥ ७-४१

ratho rathāṅgadhvaninā vijajñe vilolaghaṇṭākvaṇitena nāgaḥ |
svabhartunāmagrahaṇādbabhūva sāndre rajasyātmaparāvabodhaḥ || 7-41

7-41. During that battle, there was such a thick veil of dust spreading in all the directions that nothing was visible. One would realise that a chariot is approaching by the clanking and rattling sound of its wheels, or of the clanging sound of the bells tied to the neck of elephants that warned of the approaching war elephants. Similarly, when the foot soldiers clashed with each other, the only way to recognise who the opponent was, was when he raised a slogan praising his respective lord or prince. Otherwise, visibility was so low that everything looked blurred, and nothing could be discerned with the help of the eyes.

Verse no. 42:

आवृण्वतो लोचनमार्गमाजौ रजोन्धकारस्य विजृम्भितस्य।
शस्त्रक्षताश्वद्वीपवीरजन्मा बालारुणोऽभूद्रुधिरप्रवाहः॥ ७-४२

āvṛṇvato locanamārgamājau rajondhakārasya vijṛmbhitasya |
śastrakṣatāśvadvīpavīrajanmā bālāruṇo'bhūdrudhirpravāhaḥ || 7-42

7-42. The dust that blinded the eyes and spread everywhere in the battle-field settled somewhat when it came in touch with a stream of thick blood that flowed on the ground from the wounds of dead men and animals who had been cut to pieces with various types of arms. The natural red colour of this stream of blood was like the sight of a river when it is viewed at the time of sunrise.

[Note--The sun's light has a red hue at the time of sunrise. When this sunlight is reflected from the surface of water in a river or lake, the water itself appears to have a red colour. This natural phenomenon is enhanced manifold times if a dust storm is blowing simultaneously. Here, the dust raised in the battle-field by the two armies is likened to the dust storm, and the red colour of the blood is akin to the sun's rays at the time of sunrise when it is reflected on the water especially during a dust storm.]

Verse no. 43:

स चिह्नमूलः क्षतजेन रेणुस्तस्योपरिष्ठात्पवनापधूतः।
अङ्गारशेषस्य हुताशनस्य पूर्वोत्थितो धूम इवाबभासे॥ ७-४३

sa cchinnamūlaḥ kṣatajena reṇustasyopariṣṭātpavanāpadhūtaḥ |
aṅgāraśeṣasya hutāśanasya pūrvotthito dhūma ivābabhāse || 7-43

7-43. At that time, so much thick blood flowed on the ground that the layer of dust on the surface of the battle-field got stuck in this blood and settled on its surface as a thick blanket, while the dust some distance above the ground was fanned by the wind and it spread in all the directions, just like the case of a fire-sacrifice where the smoke immediately around the firewood had subsided and only embers are left, while the column of smoke that had already risen above the fire pit is fanned in all the directions by the breeze that blows.

Verse no. 44:

प्रहारमूर्च्छापगमे रथस्था यन्तृनुपालभ्य निवर्तिताश्वान्।
यैः सादिता लक्षितपूर्वकेतूंस्तानेव सामर्षतया निजघ्नुः॥ ७-४४

prahāramūrcchāpagame rathasthā yantṛnupālabhya nivartitāśvān |
yaiḥ sādītā lakṣitapūrvaketūnstāneva sāmārṣatayā nijaghnuḥ || 7-44

7-44. Those warriors who had been wounded and had fallen unconscious in their chariots during their clash with their opponents were carried away from the battle-field by their charioteers, but when they regained consciousness they scolded their charioteers for bringing them away from the field of action as if they were cowards. Then they would immediately return to challenge their adversary, recognising the latter on the basis of the flag fluttering on his chariot, and begin attacking his opponent with full might stoked with a burning desire for vengeance.

Verse no. 45:

**अप्यर्धमार्गे परबाणलूना धनुर्भृताम् हस्तवताम् पृषत्काः।
संप्रापुरेवात्मजवानुवृत्त्या पूर्वार्धभागेः फलिभिः शरव्यम्॥ ७-४५**

apyardhamārge parabāṇalūnā dhanurbhṛtām hastavatām pṛṣatkāḥ |
saṁprāpurevātmajavānuvṛtṭyā pūrvārdhabhāgaiḥ phalibhiḥ śaravyam || 7-45

7-45. Though the arrows shot by skilled archers towards their enemies were cut in the middle of their flight path by the countering arrows shot deftly by the enemy in an attempt to neutralise these incoming arrows, yet the arrows had such high velocity that their pointed heads (i.e. the forepart of the arrow) managed to strike the enemy nevertheless, and only the shaft (the hind part of the arrow) fell to the ground.

Verse no. 46:

**आधोरणानाम् गजसंनिपाते शिरांसि चक्रैर्निशितैः क्षुराग्रैः।
हतान्यपि श्येनखाग्रकोटिव्यासक्तकेशानि चिरेण पेतुः॥ ७-४६**

ādhoraṇānām gajasamnipāte śirāṁsi cakrainiśitaiḥ kṣurāgraiḥ |
hatānyapi śyenanakhāgrakoṭi vyāsaktakeśāni cireṇa petuḥ || 7-46

7-46. During the clash of the war elephants, the heads of the combatants were cut-off by a sort of weapon resembling a discus that had sharp, serrated, saw-like edges. These severed heads were snatched by hawks hovering over the battle-field as they swooped in and flew away with their prized catches.

Verse no. 47:

**पूर्वम् प्रहर्ता न जघान भूयः प्रतिप्रहाराक्षममश्वसादी।
तुरंगमस्कन्धनिषण्णदेहम् प्रत्याश्वसन्तम् रिपुमाचकाङ्क्ष॥ ७-४७**

pūrvam prahartā na jaghāna bhūyaḥ pratiprahārākṣamamaśvasādī |
turaṅgamaskandhaniṣaṇṇadeham pratyāśvasantam ripumācakāṅkṣa || 7-47

7-47. One of the soldiers riding a horse back struck his opponent with such a force that the latter slumped on the saddle and lay on the back of his mount (i.e. the horse) with his head dangling on its side, because he had no energy left in him to raise himself again, or maybe he had lost his consciousness. The first cavalry man did not attack the other soldier, who had just slumped on the back of his horse, again (as good soldiers do not harm their enemies if the latter had fallen). On the contrary, he hoped his opponent won't die because of the assault, and would regain consciousness in due course of time when his wounds heal. It is because to further attack an enemy who had already fallen, is regarded as unethical and an evil deed worthy of contempt.

[Note--This particular instance highlights how ancient warriors fought battles keeping in mind good principles of morality and ethics--that if one's opponent has fallen, or prays for mercy, or is in some way seriously wounded and incapable to fight, then it would be wrong and contemptuous to kill him, no matter how great an animosity or seriousness of the grudge that may have existed between the two combatants prior to the confrontation. Battles were fought on principles and between equals, and not when one of the combatants is weak in any manner and unable to defend himself. Victory lay in how a warrior overcame his opponent by employing knowledge, skill and deftness, and not in showing cruelty and mercilessness.]

Verse no. 48:

तनुत्यजाम् वर्मभृताम् विकोशैर्बृहत्सु दन्तेष्वसिभिः पतद्भिः।
उद्यन्तमग्निम् शमयांबभूवुर्गजा विविग्नाः करशीकरेण॥ ७-४८

tanutyajām varmabhṛtām vikośaibr̥hatsu danteṣvasibhiḥ patadbhiḥ |
udyantamagnim śamayāmbabhūvurgajā vivignāḥ karaśīkareṇa || 7-48

7-48. Fearless and brave foot soldiers of the infantry brigades of both the sides, soldiers who did not care for their lives, struck the long tusks of war elephants with their naked swords with such a force that sparks flew from the point of impact, which in turn terrified the elephants who thought these sparks were caused because their tusks had caught fire. So the panicky elephants tried to cool their hot tusks by using their trunks to blow air cooled by whatever moisture was available in their trunks.

Verse no. 49:

शिलीमुखोत्कृत्तशिरःफलाद्या च्युतैः शिरस्त्रैश्चषकोत्तरेव।
रणक्षितिः शोणितमद्यकुल्या रराज मृत्योरिव पानभूमिः॥ ७-४९

śīlīmukhotkṛttaśiraḥphalāḍhyā cyutaiḥ śirastraiścaśakottareva |
raṇakṣitiḥ śoṇitamadyakulyā rarāja mṛtyoriva pānabhūmiḥ || 7-49

7-49. That battle-field was like a banquet hall doubling as a pub for the God of Death where severed heads of men and animals were like the fruits served during a drinking orgy organised in honour of this God, upturned crowns and helmets served the purpose of bowls and cups, and the liberally flowing blood was like the wine itself.

Verse no. 50:

उपान्तयोर्निष्कुषितम् विहंगैराक्षिप्य तेभ्यः पिशितप्रियापि।
केयूरकोटिक्षततालुदेशा शिवा भुजच्छेदमपाचकार॥ ७-५०

upāntayorniṣkuṣitam vihaṅgairākṣipya tebhyaḥ piśitapriyāpi |
keyūrakotiḥṣatātāludeśā śivā bhujacchedamapācakāra || 7-50

7-51. Large numbers of flesh-eating birds such as vultures swooped down on the battle-field and began tearing apart and nibbling at the hands of the corpses of dead soldiers. Meanwhile, she-jackals too came in large numbers to have a good feast; they snatched the remnants of the hands from the vultures and began eating flesh themselves, only to find that the armlets made of metals with sharp edges or pointed spikes which these soldiers wore had got stuck in their throats, which compelled them to leave half-eaten hands (and other organs) and move away from the site though the animal is very fond of eating fresh flesh.

Verse no. 51:

कश्चिद्विषत्खड्गहृतोत्तमाङ्गः सद्यो विमानप्रभुतामुपेत्य।
वामाङ्गसंसक्तसुराङ्गनः स्वम् नृत्यत्कबन्धम् समरे ददर्श॥ ७-५१

kaścidviṣatkhaḍgahr̥tōttamāṅgaḥ sadyo vimānaprabhutāmupetya |
vāmāṅgasamsaktasurāṅganaḥ svam nṛtyatkabandham samare dadarśa ||
7-51

7-51. One of the soldier's head was cut-off by the sword of his opponent. Since he had met a noble death fighting like a brave warrior in the battle-field, his soul immediately assumed a heavenly form. He got on a heavenly chariot with an Apsara (damsels who attend a person who die a noble death and become eligible for entry into heaven) standing on his left to attend him. From this vantage point, he could watch his headless mortal body dancing on the battle-field below in a macabre scene of 'death-dance' (where headless torsos dance and sway madly for sometime after the head has been severed, before falling down lifeless on the ground).

[Note--This verse highlights the belief that warriors attain heaven if they die a noble death fighting face-to-face courageously in the battle-field, instead of fleeing like a coward, or attacking their enemies by hiding behind something. The next two verses also endorse this view.]

Verse no. 52:

**अन्योन्यसूतोन्मथनादभूताम् तावेव सूतौ रथिनौ च कौचित्।
व्यश्वौ गदाव्यायतसंप्रहारौ भग्नायुधौ बाहुविमर्दनिष्ठौ॥ ७-५२**

anyonyasūtonmathanādabhūtām tāveva sūtau rathinau ca kaucit |
vyaśvau gadāvyāyatasamprahārau bhagnāyudhau bāhuvimardaniṣṭhau ||
7-52

7-52. Somewhere else in the battle-field, two chariot-riding warriors themselves took the reins of their chariots in their own hands when their charioteers were killed by their respective opponent. As the confrontation escalated and when the horses yoked to their chariots were also killed, then they clashed with each other on foot, using their maces and clubs as weapons. Eventually, when even their maces or clubs too were broken, these two brave warriors engaged in a fierce manual dual, thrashing, kicking, punching and strangulating each other fiercely till both of them fell dead on the battle-field.

Verse no. 53:

**परस्परेण क्षतयोः प्रहर्त्रोरुत्क्रान्तवाय्वोः समकालमेव।
अमर्त्यभावेऽपि कयोश्चिदासीदेकाप्सरःप्रार्थितयोर्विवादः॥ ७-५३**

paraspāreṇa kṣatayoḥ prahartṛorutkrāntavāyvoḥ samakārameva |
amartyabhāve'pi kayościdāśīdekāpsaraḥprārthitayorvivādaḥ || 7-53

7-53. When those two warriors assumed a godly form and went to heaven after dying a warrior's noble death, both of them met a Apsara and became infatuated with her to such an extent that they started fighting once again to have a right over her.

[Note-Even after death, they could not change their mental state of longing for a female. This particular fault-line in their basic character was the primary reason why they had ambushed and fought prince Aja in the first place, because they wanted to grab his bride, princess Indumati. What this episode tells us is simple--only those souls who are pure and free from worldly desires are truly worthy of attaining heaven, for the rest they forfeit this rare chance of attaining heaven and getting permanent peace and joy for themselves even if they get a chance to go to the door of heaven by the virtue of other reasons.

And since heaven is no place for such cheap mindset, and though it is not expressly mentioned here as to what happened to these two warriors, but obviously they were pushed away from heaven, and either shown the door to hell, or sent back to earth.]

Verse no. 54:

व्यूहावुभौ तावितरेतरस्माद्भङ्गम् जयम् चापतुरव्यवस्थम्।
पश्चात्पुरोमारुतयोः प्रवृद्धौ पर्यायवृत्त्येव महार्णवोर्मिः॥ ७-५४

vyūhāvubhau tāvitaretarasmādbhaṅgam jayam cāpaturavyavastham |
paścātpuromārutayoḥ pravṛddhau paryāyavṛttypreva mahārṇavormī || 7-54

7-54. Even as the wind makes the waves of the ocean move forward and backward, as is witnessed during high and low tides, so did the two armies moved forward and backward, sometimes winning ground by pushing the enemy back, and at other time getting pushed back themselves (with a decisive victory eluding both the armies).

Verse no. 55:

परेण भग्नेऽपि बले महौजा ययावजः प्रत्यरिसैन्यमेव।
धूमो निवर्त्येत समीरणेन यतस्तु कक्षस्तत एव वह्निः॥ ७-५५

pareṇa bhagne'pi bale mahaujā yayāvajaḥ pratyarisainyameva |
dhūmo nivartyeta samīraṇena yatastu kakṣastata eva vahniḥ || 7-55

7-55. Just like the case of a raging fire that always moves towards dry grass, twigs, leaves and firewood even though the wind may push its smoke in different directions, so did the brave prince Aja consistently pushed his way deeper into the rank and file of the enemy even though his army was pushed back and forth by the enemy.

Verse no. 56:

रथी निषङ्गी कवची धनुष्मान्द्रप्तः स राजन्यकमेकवीरः।
निवारयामास महावराहः कल्पक्षयोद्वृत्तमिवार्णवाम्भः॥ ७-५६

rathī niṣaṅgī kavacī dhanuṣmāndrptaḥ sa rājanyakamekavīraḥ |
nivārayāmāsa mahāvarāhaḥ kalpakṣayodvṛttamivārṇavāmbhaḥ || 7-56

7-56. Even as Lord Vishnu, in his form as a Varaha (boar), went on diving deeper into the water of the ocean during the doomsday deluge to rescue earth from getting permanently drowned, so did the valiant prince Aja, riding his war chariot and fully armed with his armour and weapons, continued to relentlessly pierce through the rank and file of the enemy troops.

[Note--The story of Lord Vishnu as Varaha or Boar: It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the ocean where it had vanished. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇa, Book III, Chapter 13, 18 and 19. In brief it is as follows:

In the beginning of creation, Lord Brahma, the creator, produced Manu and Satrupa, the first male and female. The couple asked the creator to tell them what they are expected to do, at which Brahma told them to start the process of procreation and spread their off-springs on the ground, thereby propagating the human race. Manu was left flummoxed as he did not see any land to carry out his mandate. It was because the demon Hiranyaaksha had hidden it under water of the ocean of the nether world.

Finding no land to stand upon and start the process of procreation, Manu complained to Brahma; the latter meditated and discovered the reason for the earth's disappearance. Brahma then appealed to Lord Vishnu, the 'sustainer and protector of this creation, and the second god of the Trinity'. Immediately, a Vishnu manifested himself as a tiny 'Boar', the size of a thumb, which grew in size to assume a phenomenal dimension. The Boar dug up the earth from where it was concealed, held it secure on its tusks and revealed it for Brahma.

Meanwhile, when the demon Hiranyaaksha came to know of it, he faced Lord Boar with his gigantic mace and challenged the latter for a duel. In the battle that followed, Lord Vishnu, disguised as a Boar, slayed the demon and finally set the earth free from his clutches.

An interesting development played out in the meantime. The rescued earth itself needed somewhere to be kept. It was like a huge 'ball'. So, the Boar placed it on the surface of the celestial ocean from underneath of which it was rescued, and by his mystical powers made it float on it like a buoy. This is why the land mass of the earth seems to be surrounded by water from all sides.

This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil.

An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.]

Verse no. 57:

स दक्षिणम् तूणमुखेन वामम् व्यापारयन्हस्तमलक्ष्यताजौ।

आकर्णकृष्टा सकृदस्य योद्धुर्मौर्वीव बाणान्सुषुवे रिपुघ्नान्॥ ७-५७

sa dakṣiṇam tūṇamukhena vāmam vyāpārayan hastamalakṣyatājau |
ākaraṇakṛṣṭā sakṛdasya yoddhurmaurvīva bāṇānsuṣuve ripughnān || 7-57

7-57. Prince Aja shot volleys of arrows so rapidly in quick succession at his enemies that no one could know when he used his right hand to take out an arrow from his quiver, when he mounted it on his bow with his left hand, and when he pulled the bow's string back towards his ears to shoot that arrow. What one could see was a constant stream of deadly volley after volley of arrows pouring out from Aja's bow from near his ears and flying towards his enemies.

[Note--It was like the case of a modern-day machine gun fire when once the trigger is pulled, the bullets pour out in rapid succession with empty cartridges falling by the side in a constant stream.

In the story of the Ramayana, we read that Lord Ram too had fired volley after volley of arrows at demons Khar and Dushan in quick succession so much so that the demon's vast army was killed in a very short time: refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chanda line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 20, as well as 2nd line of Doha no. 20-a.]

Verse no. 58:

स रोषदष्टाधिकलोहितोष्ठाव्यक्तोर्ध्वरेखा भृकुटीर्वहद्भिः।
तस्तार गाम् भल्लनिकृत्तकण्ठैर्हूकारगर्भैर्द्विषताम् शिरोभिः॥ ७-५८

sa roṣadaṣṭādhikaloḥitoṣṭhairyavyaktordhvarekhā bhr̥kuṭīrvahadbhiḥ |
tastāra gām bhallanikṛttakaṇṭhāirhūmkāragarbhairdviṣatām śīrobhiḥ || 7-58

7-58. These enemies had lunged at Aja wrathfully; they were so furious with him that they had knitted their eyebrows in rage, and had bit their own lips so hard in anger that their lips turned red and began oozing blood. With deft manoeuvring and skilful use of crescent shaped heads of his spears and arrows, prince Aja covered the ground of the battle-field with the severed the heads of all the enemy princes.

Verse no. 59:

सर्वैर्बलाङ्गैर्द्विरदप्रधानैः सर्वायुधैः कङ्कटभेदिभिश्च।
सर्वप्रयत्नेन च भूमिपालास्तस्मिन्प्रजहुर्युधि सर्व एव॥ ७-५९

sarvairbalāṅgairdviradapradhānaiḥ sarvāyudhaiḥ kaṅkaṭabhedibhiśca |
sarvaprayatnena ca bhūmipālāstasminprajahruryudhi sarva eva || 7-59

7-59. Finding prince Aja in their midst, all the enemy princes got together, collected their armies and weapons, and began attacking him simultaneously from every side in a variety of ways, thinking that by the combined force of numbers and strength they would be able to easily subdue Aja by hook or by crook strategy.

Verse no. 60:

सोऽस्त्रव्रजैश्छन्नरथः परेषाम् ध्वजाग्रमात्रेण बभूव लक्ष्यः।
नीहारमग्नो दिनपूर्वभागः किञ्चित्प्रकाशेन विवस्वतेव॥ ७-६०

so'stravrajaiśchannarathaḥ pareṣām dhvajāgramātreṇa babhūva lakṣyaḥ |
nīhāramagno dinapūrvabhāgaḥ kiñcitprakāśena vivasvateva || 7-60

7-60. These enemy princes shot so many arrows simultaneously at Aja that the latter's chariot became shrouded in a veil of enemy arrows. Just like the presence of the sun in the early morning sky during a thick fog is ascertained by the hazy blob of light in the eastern sky, so was the case with Aja's chariot as its presence could be determined only by the fluttering flag atop its mast.

Verse no. 61:

प्रियंवदात्प्राप्तमसौ कुमारः प्रायुङ्क्त राजस्वधिराजसूनुः।

गान्धर्वमस्त्रम् कुसुमास्त्रकान्तः प्रस्वापनम् स्वप्ननिवृत्तलौल्यः॥ ७-६१

priyamvadātprāptamasau kumāraḥ prāyuṅkta rājasvadhiraḥ sūnuḥ |
gāndharvamastram kusumāstrakāntaḥ prasvāpanam svapnanivṛttalaulyaḥ || 7-61

7-61. Finding himself cornered and alone, surrounded by enemies baying for his blood, Aja, who was as handsome as Kamdeo (the patron deity of charm and beauty) and who ever remained alert and vigilant, invoked the magical weapon called 'Sammohan' that he had been granted to him by the gandharva (demi-god) named Priyambad earlier¹, and which had the ability to throw a veil of hypnotism on his enemies, making them doze off to sleep.

[Note--¹Refer: Canto no. 5, verse no. 57.]

Verse no. 62:

ततो धनुष्कर्षणमूढहस्तमेकांसपर्यस्तशिरस्त्रजालम्।

तस्थौ ध्वजस्तम्भनिषण्णदेहम् निद्राविधेयम् नरदेवसैन्यम्॥ ७-६२

tato dhanuṣkarṣaṇamūḍhahastamekāṁsaparyastaśirastrajālam |
tasthau dhvajastambhaniṣaṇṇadeham nidrāvidheyam naradevasainyam ||
7-62

7-62. No sooner did Aja used the special weapon given to him by the gandharva, than everyone in the enemy's camp, right from the princes, their commanders, and to the lower rank and file of the soldiers dozed off and slumped in a dazed sleep, as if intoxicated. The hands of all the enemy soldiers became numb so that they could not even pull their bow strings; their helmets dangled over their shoulders when their heads slumped to one side; and their bodies could not stand on their own feet so they leaned against the flag poles they carried for support.

Verse no. 63:

ततः प्रियोपात्तरसेऽधरोष्ठे निवेश्य दध्मौ जलजम् कुमारः।
तेन स्वहस्तार्जितमेकवीरः पिबन्यशो मूर्तमिवाबभासे॥ ७-६३

tataḥ priyopāttarase'dharoṣṭhe niveśya dadhmau jalajam kumāraḥ |
tena svahastārjitamekavīraḥ pibanyaśo mūrtamivābabhāse || 7-63

7-63. Soon thereafter, prince Aja lifted his conch-shell to his lips that were usually reserved for the kiss of princess Indumati (his wife), and blew it hard and loud to proclaim victory. With the conch-shell touching his lips as he puffed his cheeks to blow it hard, and with his head raised high, it gave the impression that Aja was drinking the wine of his victory and celebrating his newly acquired fame as he thoroughly enjoyed the moment.

Verse no. 64:

शङ्खस्वनाभिजतया निवृत्तास्तम् सन्नशत्रुम् ददृशुः स्वयोधाः।
निमीलितानामिव पङ्कजानाम् मध्ये स्फुरन्तं प्रतिमाशशाङ्कम्॥ ७-६४

śaṅkhasvanābhijñatayā nivṛttāstam sannaśatrum dadṛśuḥ svayodhāḥ |
nimīlitānāmiva paṅkajānām madhye sphurantam pratimāśaśāṅkam || 7-64

7-64. When the soldiers of prince Aja heard the sound of his conch-shell, they immediately recognised it as that of their lord. So they instantaneously rushed in the direction from where the sound emanated, and found that Aja was standing triumphantly amidst swooning enemy warriors. The sight reminded them of an image of the full moon that appears brilliant when seen in a lake full of shrivelled lotus flowers that have closed their petals and drooped on their stalks during the night.

[Note--In this analogy, Aja is likened to the 'moon', and the enemy warriors to the 'limp lotus flowers during the night', while the battle-field itself to the 'lake'. Another interesting similarity is comparing the general environment of the battle-field to the 'night' when everything is dark, sleepy and silent. When the battle ended and the enemy soldiers swooned and fell down unconscious on the ground, there was a sudden calm in the area which was just a while ago full of the sound of battle, and the hustle and bustle of soldiers.]

Verse no. 65:

सशोणितैस्तेन शिलीमुखाग्रैर्निक्षेपिताः केतुषु पार्थिवानाम्।
यशो हृतम् संप्रति राघवेण न जीवितम् वः कृपयेति वर्णाः॥ ७-६५

saśoṇitaistena śilīmukhāgrairnikṣepitāḥ ketuṣu pārthivānām |
yaśo hṛtam samprati rāghaveṇa na jīvitam vaḥ kṛpayeti varṇāḥ || 7-65

7-65. Prince Aja used the tip of his spear as a pen, and using the freely flowing blood as red ink, he inscribed these words on the banners of the swooning warriors: 'Oh Warriors: Remember that, as of now, king Raghu's son has merely deprived you of the glory of victory, but he has graciously spared your life. {But beware--don't try dirty tricks again with him, for then, should you do that, he would deprive you of your life itself!}'

Verse no. 66:

स चापकोटीनिहितैकबाहुः शिरस्त्रनिष्कर्षणभिन्नमौलिः।

ललाटबद्धश्रमवारिबिन्दुर्भीताम् प्रियामेत्य वचो बभाषे॥ ७-६६

sa cāpakotīnihitaikabāhuḥ śirastraniṣkarṣaṇabhinnamauliḥ |
lalāṭabaddhaśramavāribindurbhitām priyāmetya vaco babhāṣe || 7-66

7-66. With a hand placed on the upper end of his bow, his hair dishevelled because he had removed his war helmet, and sweat drops wetting his forehead after the exertion of the battle, prince Aja came and presented himself before his beloved wife, Indumati who was aghast at this sight. Then Aja spoke to her as follows--

Verse no. 67:

इतः परानर्भकहार्यशस्त्रान्वैदभिः पश्यानुमता मयासि।

एवंविधेनाहवचेष्टितेन त्वम् प्रार्थ्यसे हस्तगता ममैभिः॥ ७-६७

itaḥ parānarbhakahāryaśastrānvaidarbhiḥ paśyānumatā mayāsi |
evamvidhenāhavaceṣṭitena tvam prārthyase hastagatā mamaibhiḥ || 7-67

7-67. "Oh Princess of Vidharva! Just glance around and see that all these princes of different kingdoms are sleeping like children who have exhausted themselves playing the whole day and then fall down asleep almost as if dead. They are so deeply in a slumber that even a child can take away their weapons and they won't know anything about it. Just imagine, with this kind of energy and stamina that they have, these worthless fellows had planned to take you away from me. What an ignominious shame it is for them and for their families!

{Imagine dear, I was alone, and here they were in hundreds, and yet they fell down like a pack of cards! Or were blown away like paper kites at the slightest gust of wind while they had boasted that even the mightiest of storms won't be able to move them.}"

Verse no. 68:

तस्याः प्रतिद्वन्द्विभवाद्विषादात्सद्यो विमुक्तम् मुखमाबभासे।

निःश्वासबाष्पापगमात्प्रपन्नः प्रसादमात्मीयमिवात्मदर्शः॥ ७-६८

tasyāḥ pratidvandvibhavādvīṣādātsadyo vimuktam mukhamābabhāse |
niḥśvāsabāṣpāpagamātprapannaḥ prasādamātmīyamivātmadarśaḥ || 7-68

7-68. When Indumati was convinced that the entire enemy had been wiped out, she regained her composure. All gloom and uncertainties left her thoughts, and her face lit up like a mirror from whose surface the mist formed by one's breath had been wiped off with a clean cloth.

[Note--While Aja was away fighting his enemies, princess Indumati had hidden her face in her palms and breathed heavily, uncertain of the outcome and of the fate that was in store for her. This had stained her face and made it wet and soggy. When finally her husband came to her and assured her that things were all fine for them, she once again cheered up and returned to her normal self.]

Verse no. 69:

हृष्टापि सा ह्रीविजिता न साक्षाद्वाग्भिः सखीनाम् प्रियमभ्यनन्दत्।

स्थली नवाम्भःपृषताभिवृष्टा मयूरकेकाभिरिवाभवृन्दम्॥ ७-६९

hr̥ṣṭāpi sā hr̥vījitā na sākṣādvāgbhiḥ sakhīnām priyamabhyanandat |
sthalī navāmbhaḥpṛṣatābhivr̥ṣṭā mayūrakekābhirivābhavr̥ndam || 7-69

7-69. Even as the dry earth of the forest celebrates the arrival of the first drops of rain falling down on it from the clouds above by motivating the peacock to sing and dance in praise of the life-restoring clouds that had brought new rain, so was the case with princess Indumati who was so happy at the victory and the newly acquired glory of her husband, prince Aja, that though she herself could not say anything as she felt too bashful, emotionally overwhelmed, and lost for words, but her female attendants stepped in and congratulated Aja for his achievements, singing and dancing in his honour.

[Note--Here princess Indumati is likened to the 'earth', the safe arrival of Aja as the life-giving 'rain', and the dancing and singing maids to the 'peacock'. Earth has no voice, but it feels so exhilarated when the rain comes that she motivates the peacock to sing and dance in honour of the rain-bringing clouds on her behalf. Similarly, Indumati was so choked with emotions that she could not speak a word, but her maids stepped in and praised Aja on her behalf by singing and dancing.]

Verse no. 70:

इति शिरसि स वामम् पादमाधाय राज्ञा मुदवहदनवद्याम् तामवद्यादपेतः।
रथतुरगरजोभिस्तस्य रूक्षालकाग्रा समरविजयलक्ष्मीः सैव मूर्ता बभूव॥ ७-७०

iti śirasi sa vāmam pādamaādhāya rājñā mudavahadanavadyām
tāmavadyādapetaḥ |
rathaturagarajobhistasya rūkṣālakāgrā samaravijayalakṣmīḥ saiva mūrtā babhūva
|| 7-70

7-70. The victorious and faultless prince Aja, after having given his adversaries an ignominious defeat by symbolically placing his left foot on their fallen heads, took his beautiful wife Indumati and resumed his journey homewards. The dust raised by the hooves of the horses of his entourage filled Indumati's hairs, and at that time she personified the goddess of war and victory sitting by the side of prince Aja whom this goddess had married, so to say, out of her appreciation of his unmatched valour, courage, bravery and strength.

Verse no. 71:

प्रथमपरिगतार्थस्तम् रघुः संनिवृत्तं विजयिनमभिनन्द्य श्लाघ्यजायासमेतम्।
तदुपहितकुटुम्बः शान्तिमार्गोत्सुकोऽभून्न हि सति कुलधुर्ये सूर्यवंश्या गृहाय॥ ७-७१

prathamaparigatārthastam raghuḥ saṁnivr̥ttam vijayinamabhinandya
ślāghyajāyāsametaḥ |
tadupahitakuṭumbaḥ śāntimārgotsuko'bhūnna hi sati kuladhurye sūryavaṁśyā
gr̥hāya || 7-71

7-71. King Raghu had already received (through his spies) a detailed account of everything that had happened even before the arrival of his son, prince Aja. So therefore, after warmly welcoming his brave, valiant, victorious and heroic son Aja alongside Indumati, a wife most worthy of him, Raghu decided to hand over the responsibilities of the family and the kingdom to his able son, and himself retire to lead a life of peace and meditation in preparation for departure for heaven (i.e. death). This is because it had been a tradition with the kings of the Solar Race (to which Raghu belonged) that when their heir becomes adult and competent to run the affairs of life, then the father would retire from active role as a householder, and instead lead a peaceful life prior to his ultimate departure from this mortal world.

इति महाकवि कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये सप्तमः सर्गः

iti mahākavi kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvyē saptamaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 7th canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-95:

Introduction

After prince Aja returned home with his bride, and his illustrious father king Raghu handed all responsibilities to him and himself retired to a hermitage to spend the rest of his remaining days doing meditation and penance, Aja assumed the royal title of a 'King-Emperor' which till now his father had enjoyed. So henceforth, he was known as a 'King' of Ayodhya, and an 'Emperor' of the extended domain of his kingdom which included all the territories his father had won during his 'Digvijay' military campaign as narrated earlier in Canto no. 4.

The royal priest sage Vashistha formally anointed and declared prince Aja as the King-Emperor of the realm by sprinkling holy consecrated water on him and putting the royal crown on his head in a consecration ceremony duly attended by one and all. At that time, Aja looked very glorious and charming; he not only acquired the throne of his father Raghu, but he also acquired all the qualities, the virtues, the good name and the fame for which Raghu was so famous. The citizens rejoiced at his appointment as their King. King Aja's reputation was so formidable that all his enemies became numbed into submission, and abandoned all their nefarious designs against the kingdom of Ayodhya.

King Aja followed the noble principles of magnanimity, forgiveness, charity and good conduct in all spheres of life and his dealing with the affairs of the kingdom. He treated his subjects kindly, and loved them as a father would love his large family. He adopted a middle path in dealing with the affairs of his kingdom as well as his adversaries--i.e. he was neither too harsh nor too soft, and dealt with each episode on the basis of its merit. Even while punishing offenders, he ensured that the punishment was in accordance to the wrong done and is bearable for the wrong-doer, and not so harsh that the latter is made to suffer beyond his bearable limits.

His father, the former king Raghu, waited for some time to see how his son, the newly appointed king Aja, was handling the matters of life. When he was fully satisfied that Aja was competent enough to stand on his own two feet, Raghu retired to a hermitage outside the city with his wife.

During those times of transition, it appeared that the Solar Race was like a sky where on the one side the moon was setting in the western horizon, and the sun was rising in the east, symbolising the retirement of Raghu and the ascendance to the throne of his son Aja respectively. On one side was king Aja sitting on a throne to preside over a great empire, and on the other hand was his father Raghu sitting on a mat like a reclusive hermit, engaged in doing meditation, contemplation and penance. Further, while on the one end there was king Aja who controlled all his enemies by the sheer strength of his arms and valour, and on the other end was his father Raghu who controlled his own self and harnessed his energy to conquer the fear of death as he cheerfully left this mortal world

and ascended to heaven to merge his soul with the Supreme Soul, a destiny called the final deliverance and emancipation of the living being.

After some years of leading a hermit's life, Raghu's soul left his mortal body and attained salvation. His son, king Aja, performed his father's last rites and ceremonies with a very heavy heart and in accordance with established Vedic traditions. The royal priest and other senior members of the kingdom consoled him; Aja realised that he had great responsibilities on his head, and after some time spent grieving for his late father, he resumed his duties.

In due course of time, king Aja's queen Indumati gave birth to a son who was named 'Dashrath' (also pronounced as Dasrath or Dashratha). This son was as radiant as the sun, and just like the light of the sun spreads in all the ten directions, so would the fame of this newly born son of king Aja spread in all the corners of the world. Hence, learned scholars and elders of the kingdom named him 'Dashrath'--i.e. one whose fame would ride the chariot of glory in all the ten directions of the world. {The ten directions are the following: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.}

One day, while the king and the queen were peacefully enjoying life in the royal garden, the celestial sage Narad was passing overhead with his flute on which hanged a garland. Due to a gust of wind, that garland fell down from the heavens on queen Indumati, which made her swoon and suddenly die. This unexpected turn of events plunged king Aja in a vortex of gloom and dismay. An excellent portrait of the loving husband lamenting over the untimely death of his beloved wife has been painted beautifully by the poet Kalidas in this Canto.

At that time, the royal priest sage Vashistha sent a messenger to king Aja to explain the background of Indumati's sudden death. In her previous life, she was an Apsara by the name of Hirani. Once, Indra, the over-jealous king of heaven, sent her to spoil the penance of a sage named Trimbendu. The sage became furious and cursed her to be born as a human in this mortal world. When the Apsara pleaded for mercy, telling the sage that she was not at fault as she had to obey the command of the king of heaven, i.e. Indra, the sage remitted her curse and told her that she would be born in a great family, would marry a great king, give birth to a great son, and then when a flower from heaven would fall on her she would be delivered from the curse of having a mortal body, i.e. she would return to her former self as a heavenly damsel known as an Apsara and live in the heavenly garden known as Nandan Vana. So Indumati had not died but had attained liberation from a curse to become an inhabitant of heaven. This development is not to be regretted, but celebrated. This information somewhat comforted Aja, and he came to terms to what destiny had in store for him.

After the cremation of queen Indumati, king Aja lost all interests in life, yet he resolved to live in a dispassionate manner for some more years for the sake of his son Dashrath. So therefore, after spending eight years silently grieving for his late queen, and spending his days moodily, in a gloomy and distraught manner, king Aja handed over all the

responsibilities of the kingdom to his son, prince Dashrath, and like his father Raghu, himself retired to a hermitage to live a life as a hermit in preparation for his final exit from this mortal world to go to heaven and live a comfortable life there in its heavenly garden called Nandan Vana to be united with his beloved Indumati, now as an Apsara.

With this background information, now let us start reading the text of Canto 8, verse-by-verse as follows--

Verse no. 1:

अथ तस्य विवाहकौतुकम् ललितम् बिभ्रत एव पार्थिवः।
वसुधामपि हस्तगामिनीमकरोदिन्दुमतीमिवापराम्॥ ८-१

atha tasya vivāhakautukam lalitam bibhrata eva pārthivah।
vasudhāmapī hastagāminīmakarodindumatīmivāparām || 8-1

8-1. Soon after prince Aja returned home with his beautiful wife Indumati and the sacred marriage thread was still on his wrist, his father Raghu anointed him as the next King in an elaborate coronation ceremony in which Raghu handed over the responsibility of taking care of the entire world that was under his jurisdiction to Aja in the same way as Indumati was handed over to him by king Bhoj of Vidharva.

For all practical purposes, now onwards Aja would be known as the 'King-Emperor' of the kingdom of Ayodhya as well as the extended realm of the rest of the world that was bought under the overall command of the kingdom by his father Raghu¹.

[Note--¹Refer: Canto no. 4 wherein we read about the Digvijay military campaign of king Raghu.]

Verse no. 2:

दुरितैरपि कर्तुमात्मसात्प्रयतन्ते नृपसूनवो हि यत्।
तदुपस्थितमग्रहीदजः पितुराजेति न भोगतृष्णया॥ ८-२

duritairapi kartumātmasātprayatante nṛpasūnavo hi yat।
tadupasthitamagrahīdajaḥ piturājēti na bhogatṛṣṇayā || 8-2

8-2. It is observed that many princes use all sorts of deceit and immoral means, such as the use of poison, to usurp the throne and the crown of a prosperous kingdom like that of Ayodhya, but the same throne and crown was willingly given to Aja by his father, and Aja received this honour not out of greed or a desire for enjoyment of the trappings of power and royalty, but out of respect for his illustrious father as well as to fulfil his moral duties and responsibilities to the subjects of the kingdom.

[Note-- It has been a common practice amongst princes that they would often resort to all kinds of foul and unfair means, like poisoning their father and eliminating elder brothers etc, to usurp the crown of a kingdom. But prince Aja was a very upright and conscientious man; he accepted the throne and its crown only because his father, king Raghu, willingly gave them to him.]

Verse no. 3:

**अनुभूय वसिष्ठसंभृतैः सलिलैस्तेन सहाभिषेचनम्।
विशदोच्छवसितेन मेदिनी कथयामास कृतार्थतामिव॥ ८-३**

anubhūya vasiṣṭhasambhṛtaiḥ salilaistena sahābhiṣecanam|
viśadocchvasitena medinī kathayāmāsa kṛtārthatāmiva || 8-3

8-3. At the time of coronation ceremony of king Aja, the royal priest, sage Vashistha, sprinkled consecrated holy water on him while reciting hymns from the Vedas meant for such auspicious occasions. Some of this consecrated water fell on the ground, and due to the heat of that day the water turned into steam and rose up from the ground around Aja. It was as if mother earth too wanted to join in the coronation ceremony to bless king Aja and express her joy.

Verse no. 4:

**स बभूव दुरासदः परैर्गुरुणाऽथर्वविदा कृतक्रियः।
पवनाग्निसमागमो ह्ययम् सहितम् ब्रह्म यदस्त्रतेजसा॥ ८-४**

sa babhūva durāsadaḥ parairguruṇā'tharavidā kṛtakriyaḥ|
pavanāgnisamāgamo hyayam sahitam brahma yadastratejasā || 8-4

8-4. When sage Vashistha, who was an expert in the Atharva Veda, sprinkled consecrated water on king Aja at the time of the coronation, at that time Aja acquired an additional halo of glory, fame and power just like a fire is rekindled and springs back to life when a soft breeze blows to stoke it. {Or, to cite another example, just like addition of ghee or clarified butter to a fire would immediately make the fire to leap up with new flame.}

It is in fitness of things that Aja would acquire an exceptional halo of glory, fame and power at that time because of the conjunction of two powerful forces--one representing his own virtues and the power of his soul, and the other representing the power and authority that are inherent in the crown and the royal sceptre that the king holds--that now joined hands to enhance his stature.

To wit, for all practical purposes, king Aja's own natural abilities were now enhanced and multiplied manifold times when they were officially blessed by a learned sage of Vashistha's stature, which made Aja became a formidable force to reckon with, a force that was so powerful that it became intolerable for the enemies, even as a flame of a

fire becomes intolerable and ferocious if it gets the support of the wind that helps to fan it and burn everything around.

{No enemy of the kingdom would now dare to raise his head against king Aja as he was invincible in his own right, but now he had the additional blessing of sage Vashistha as another layer of protective and empowering shield around him.}

Verse no. 5:

**रघुमेव निवृत्तयौवनम् तममन्यन्त नवेश्वरम् प्रजाः।
स हि तस्य न केवलाम् श्रियम् प्रतिपेदे सकलान्गुणानपि॥ ८-५**

raghumeva nivṛttayauvanam tamamanyanta naveśvaram prajāḥ|
sa hi tasya na kevalām śriyam pratipede sakalāṅguṇānapi || 8-5

8-5. The subjects of the kingdom rejoiced at Aja being appointed as their next ruler. They felt that their former ruler Raghu had become young once again to ascend the throne as their king, because Aja presented a perfect picture of his illustrious father. He not only inherited the crown of the kingdom, but he also inherited all the goodness, qualities, virtues and merits of his father for which the latter was so famed and highly respected.

Verse no. 6:

**अधिकम् शुशुभे शुभंयुना द्वितयेन द्वयमेव संगतम्।
पदमृद्धमजेन पैतृकम् विनयेनास्य नवम् च यौवनम्॥ ८-६**

adhikam śuśubhe śubhanyunā dvitayena dvayameva saṅgatam|
padamṛddhamajena paitṛkam vinayenāsyā navam ca yauvanam|| 8-6

8-6. At that time, there were only two things that looked wonderful to the world at large: one was king Aja who was very happy and satisfied at having inherited a prosperous kingdom from his father, and the other was his youthfulness that found its beauty and glory in the gracious, courteous and kind manners of Aja. {Though not mentioned here, we can add one more from our side--and it is that the people of the kingdom too were thoroughly happy at Aja becoming their king.}

[Note--Usually, when power and wealth join hands in youthful days of a person, the latter normally becomes proud, arrogant, haughty, egoist and rough. King Aja, on the other hand, was just the opposite--he was kind, merciful, modest, gracious and courteous. This was something in his character which made him loved by everyone. Even his enemies respected these qualities in him.]

Verse no. 7:

सदयम् बुभुजे महाभुजः सहसोद्वेगमियम् व्रजेदिति।
अचिरोपनताम् स मेदिनीम् नवपाणिग्रहणाम् वधूमिव॥ ८-७

sadayam bubhuje mahābhujah sahasodvegamiyam vrajediti।
aciropanatām sa medinīm navapāṇigrahaṇām vadhūmiva || 8-7

8-7. Even as a newly wed bride gets annoyed and angry if she is subjected to indecent and rude behaviour, and forced to have an intercourse with her husband, and therefore it is always wise and appropriate to treat her politely, kindly and compassionately, so also was the wisdom followed by king Aja who enjoyed the privileges of the kingdom and treated the earth under his command with a lot of grace, kindness and compassion.

[Note--Earth under the rule of a monarch is regarded as his second consort, the first being his queen. A wise and dutiful ruler would treat both equally, and with a lot of understanding and kindness shown to both of them. So therefore, king Aja treated both his queen Indumati and the earth with equal care and kindness.]

Verse no. 8:

अहमेव मतो महीपतेरिति सर्वः प्रकृतिष्वचिन्तयत्।
उदधेरिव निम्नगाशतेष्वभवन्नास्य विमानना क्वचित्॥ ८-८

ahameva mato mahīpateriti sarvaḥ prakṛtiṣvacintayat।
udadheriva nimnagāśateṣvabhavannāsyā vimānanā kvacit || 8-8

8-8. King Aja treated all his subjects equally, without any kind of discrimination. He never insulted anyone, never spoke harshly to anyone, nor said anything against any of his subjects. So everyone loved the king, had direct access to him, and every person thought that the king loves him more than anybody else.

King Aja's qualities were like that of the mighty ocean that accepts all the rivers that come to its shore to empty out their water into it, and the ocean does not refuse to accept the water of any river no matter how small the river is, or how turbid its water is.

Verse no. 9:

न खरो न च भूयसा मृदुः पवमानः पृथिवीरुहानिव।
स पुरस्कृतमध्यमक्रमो नमयामास नृपाननुद्धरन्॥ ८-९

na kharo na ca bhūyasā mṛduḥ pavamānaḥ pṛthivīruhāniva।
sa puraskṛtamadhyamakramo namayāmāsa nṛpānanuddharan || 8-9

8-9. King Aja was neither too harsh nor too mild in his dealing with the people of the world, and this included both his subjects as well as his adversaries. Just like a soft but a

powerful gust of wind is able to bend tall trees and shake its leaves without either uprooting the tree or breaking its branches or leaves, so similar was also the case of Aja whose mild but firm nature made all his enemies bow down and submit before him as he did not remove them from their thrones but allowed them to continue with their kingdom subject to the condition that they submit to him, do not revolt, and pay a small amount of annual tribute to the crown of Ayodhya as a token of their acceptance of its king's (i.e. Aja's) sovereignty over them.

[Note--This simple principle of diplomacy helped to maintain peace throughout the empire. All the kings were happy that they were allowed to retain their crown with full honour, and the little bit of tribute they had to pay to king-emperor Aja was merely a tiny fraction of their wealth. So it did not matter to them at all. It endeared king Aja to everyone, and since the majority of rulers favoured him, the tiny fraction who thought otherwise were cornered into submission in the face of an overwhelming support for Aja.]

Verse no. 10:

अथ वीक्ष्य रघुः प्रतिष्ठितम् प्रकृतिष्वात्मजमात्मवत्तया |
विषयेषु विनाशधर्मसु त्रिदिवस्थेष्वपि निःस्पृहोऽभवत् ॥ ८-१०

atha vīkṣya raghuḥ pratiṣṭhitam prakṛtiṣvātmajamātmavattayā |
viṣayeṣu vināśadharmasu tridivastheṣvapi niḥspṛho'bhavat || 8-10

8-10. When Raghu, the father of Aja, observed that his son is very competently and wisely looking after the affairs of the kingdom with an attitude of equality and dispassion, and that Aja has firmly established himself amongst the people of the kingdom by gaining their trust, confidence and affection, he was mightily satisfied and pleased with his illustrious son. Raghu developed dispassion towards the material comforts of this world even though they were similar to those found in heaven. {Therefore, Raghu decided to renounce the world and live the rest of his life like a hermit.}

Verse no. 11:

गुणवत्सुतरोपितश्रियः परिणामे हि दिलीपवंशजाः |
पदवीम् तरुवल्कवाससाम् प्रयताः संयमिनाम् प्रपेदिरे ॥ ८-११

guṇavatsutaropitaśriyaḥ pariṇāme hi dilīpavaṁśajāḥ |
padavīm taruvalkavāsasām prayatāḥ saṁyaminām prapedire || 8-11

8-11. It had been an honoured tradition amongst the descendents of king Dilip's family that when their son attains adulthood and becomes competent enough to handle affairs of life and the kingdom, the father hands over all responsibilities to him and appoints him as

the next king of the kingdom. Then the father adopts the attire of a monk and retires from active life, going to the forest to live like a hermit and pass his remaining days in meditation, penance and contemplation on the self and the Supreme Self while preparing to make a quiet and peaceful exit from this mortal world to attain deliverance and emancipation for his soul.

So therefore, it was in order of things that Raghu too stepped down from the throne after coronation of his son Aja as the next king of Ayodhya, detach himself from all material world and its charms, attire himself in a monk's robe, and retire as a hermit to a hermitage on the outskirts of the city.

Verse no. 12:

तमरण्यसमाश्रयोन्मुखम् शिरसा वेष्टनशोभिना सुतः।
पितरम् प्रणिपत्य पादयोरपरित्यागमयाचतात्मनः॥ ८-१२

tamarāṇyasamāśrayonmukham śirasā veṣṭanaśobhinā sutah|
pitaram praṇipatya pādayoraparityāgamayācatātmanah || 8-12

8-12. When Aja found out that his father was preparing to go to the forest as a hermit, he was overwhelmed with surging emotions of grief at the thought that he would now be separated from his loving father for good, will no more have his constant guidance, will not be able to interact with him on a daily basis, thoughts that made him feel as if he was being orphaned even while his father was still alive.

So therefore, Aja bowed his head before his father, with the crown still on it, requesting his father, Raghu, most earnestly not to go to the forest.

Verse no. 13:

रघुरश्रुमुखस्य तस्य तत्कृतवानीप्सितमात्मजप्रियः।
न तु सर्प इव त्वचम् पुनः प्रतिपेदे व्यपवर्जिताम् श्रियम्॥ ८-१३

raghuraśrumukhasya tasya tatkr̥tavānīpsitamātmajapriyah|
na tu sarpa iva tvacam punaḥ pratipede vyapavarjitām śriyam || 8-13

8-13. Raghu was emotionally touched by his son's heart-felt pleading that expressed his grief when he asked his father not to abandon him. So, Raghu decided not to go to the far away forest, but live like a recluse in a small thatched hut just outside the city. He withdrew himself from all engagements with this world, and confined himself to his hut, living like a true hermit. Like a serpent that does not accept its discarded old skin (known as a slough) again, so likewise Raghu never again accepted the comforts and pleasures of kingship, but rather lived like a true renunciate, a true hermit, a true monk even while living within the reach of his kin.

[Note--This is a very significant verse. It tells us that if a person has renounced the world sincerely, and if he truly treats himself as a monk or hermit, then his own home, or a place away from the home itself but not too far away, is as good as the hermitage in a remote forest, cut off from civilisation. On the contrary, if he goes to the forest simply because it is expected of him to do so in accordance with set norms, and his mind remains engrossed in worldly affairs, then he gets no spiritual credit. On the contrary, he is only making life difficult for himself as his mind would be torn between the pleasures of the world for which he yearns, and a forced life of renunciation which he does not like.

Besides this point, if going to the forest gives pain to his kin, then it would be a sin in itself, because as a hermit and a monk one is not supposed to make anyone feel hurt and grieved. A true hermit or monk is expected to be compassionate and merciful, and if any of his actions causes pain to others, then he goes down on the scale of spiritual merit-gaining nothing, and losing much.

Keeping all these things in mind, Raghu decided to in the suburb of the city, but for all practical purposes live like a hermit living in a secluded distant part of the wilds.]

Verse no. 14:

स किलाश्रममन्त्यमाश्रितो निवसन्नावसथे पुराद्बहिः।

समुपास्यत पुत्रभोग्यया स्नुषयेवाविकृतेन्द्रियः श्रिया॥ ८-१४

sa kilāśramamantyaamāśrito nivasannāvasathe purādbahiḥ।

samupāsyata putrabhogyayā snuṣayevāvikṛtendriyaḥ śriyā || 8-14

8-14. It is said that after adopting the garb of a monk, Raghu entered the last phase of Sanyas in a person's life, i.e. a phase of complete renunciation and detachment, and started living in a thatched hut on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya. His relationship with his son Aja as well as the wealth of his kingdom was extremely reserved and limited, just like the relationship that exists between a righteous and conscientious father-in-law and his upright daughter-in-law. Just like they live apart and keep a safe distance between themselves, so likewise Raghu kept himself detached and aloof from the affairs of the kingdom, and maintained a safe distance between himself and the surrounding world.

To wit, the earth on which his son Aja presided over as its king or lord, served Raghu by providing him with food, such as fruits and edible roots on which a hermit survives, just like a daughter-in-law would serve her old father-in-law by taking care of his daily needs, and serving him nourishing food as per his needs and likings.

Verse no. 15:

प्रशमस्थितपूर्वपार्थिवम् कुलमभ्यद्यतनूतनेश्वरम्।

नभसा निभृतेन्दुना तुलामुदितार्केण समारूरोह तत्॥ ८-१५

praśamasthitapūrvapārthivam kulamabhyadyatanūtaneśvaram|
nabhasā nibhṛtendunā tulāmuditārkeṇa samāruroha tat || 8-15

8-15. During those days of transition, the Solar Race resembled a sky in which the moon is setting on one horizon and the sun is rising on the opposite horizon. It is because on the one hand Raghu had retired from active life and leading a peaceful life of calm and quiet, a life symbolic of the moon, and on the other hand his son Aja sat on the throne of the Solar Race even as his glory, fame and reputation were increasing by the passage of time, a reminder of the rising sun that gains brilliance as it rises higher in the sky, and whose light spreads in all corners of the world.

[Note--In this verse, Raghu is likened to the moon, and Aja to the sun.]

Verse no. 16:

यतिपार्थिवलिङ्गधारिणौ ददृशाते रघुराघवौ जनैः|
अपवर्गमहोदयार्थयोर्भुवमंशाविव धर्मयोगतौ॥ ८-१६

yatipārthivaliṅgadhāriṇau dadṛśāte raghurāghavau janaiḥ|
apavargamahodayārthayorbhuvamaṁśāviva dharmayorgatau || 8-16

8-16. When the people saw their erstwhile king Raghu attired as a hermit on the one hand, and on the other hand their present king Aja dressed in royal robes as a reigning sovereign, each of them fulfilling their assigned roles to perfection, they viewed these two contrasting pictures as symbolism of the two great aspects of Dharma (religious way of life) that gives two kinds of great rewards to a person.

On the one end of the scale is a commitment to total renunciation and detachment for the material world which would lead a person towards the path of emancipation and salvation of his soul (as was represented in the present case by Raghu)--one of the two great rewards awarded by Dharma, and on the other end is the achievement of fame and glory, accompanied by majesty, material comforts and pleasures etc., that are associated with success in life (as was represented by king Aja)--the other great reward awarded by Dharma.

[Note--This verse tells us that the two great rewards one gets by following the principles of Dharma, an honourable, righteous, proper and ethical way of life that is strictly in accordance to the basic idea of any religion. One reward is good name and fame in this world, and the other reward is liberation and deliverance of the soul from this mortal world. A person leading a life observing the principles of Dharma is able to get both the rewards.]

Verse no. 17:

अजिताधिगमाय मन्त्रिभिर्युजे नीतिविशारदैरजः।
अनुपायिपदोपप्राप्तये रघुराप्तैः समियाय योगिभिः॥ ८-१७

ajitādhigamāya mantribhiryuyuje nītiviśāradairajaḥ|
anupāyipadopaprapṛāptaye raghurāptaiḥ samiyāya yogibhiḥ || 8-17

8-17. The contrast between the two aspects of life was striking. For, while on the one hand was king Aja who consulted his experienced and trusted ministers and advisors to launch a fresh military campaign known as Digvijay to reiterate and reinforce his sovereignty over the kingdoms that had already been won in a previous similar campaign launched by his father Raghu--i.e. reiterate his authority as an undisputed Emperor of the realm, and on the other hand was Raghu who consulted elderly sages and spiritual men to show him the path towards emancipation and salvation of the soul so that he can exit this mortal world and merge his soul with the Supreme Soul of creation--i.e. attain Moksha.

Verse no. 18:

नृपतिः प्रकृतीरवेक्षितुम् व्यवहारासनमाददे युवा।
परिचेतुमुपांशु धारणाम् कुशपूतम् प्रवयास्तु विष्टरम्॥ ८-१८

nṛpatiḥ prakṛtīravekṣitum vyavahārāsanamādade yuvā|
paricetumupāṁśu dhāraṇām kuśapūtam pravayāstu viṣṭaram || 8-18

8-18. Here the young king Aja sat on the throne in a court to look after the affairs of the people of the kingdom in a judicious and kind manner, and there the retired elderly monarch Raghu sat on a mat of kush grass at a secluded and quiet place to contemplate on his 'true self', the Atma, and practice self-restraint on his sense organs and concentration of the mind.

Verse no. 19:

अनयत्प्रभुशक्तिसंपदा वशमेको नृपतीनन्तरान्।
अपरः प्रणिधानयोग्यया मरुतः पञ्च शरीरगोचरान्॥ ८-१९

anayatprabhuśaktisaṁpadā vaśameko nṛpatīnanantarān|
aparaḥ praṇidhānayogyayā marutaḥ pañca śarīragocarān || 8-19

8-19. On the one hand, king Aja controlled his neighbouring princes and the adversaries who lived around the boundaries of his kingdom by employing his strength and fear of force, though he never tormented anyone in physical terms, to bring them into submission, and on the other hand his elderly father and erstwhile monarch Raghu controlled the wayward nature of the five elements of life living inside his own body, i.e.

the five kinds of winds that sustain life in a person's body, such as the Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyaana¹ by practicing self-restraint in order to keep them restrained.

[Note--¹According to the Upanishads and metaphysical philosophy, there are primarily five kinds of wind forces that operate in a person's body and keep it alive and active. The Pran is the chief wind in the body which keeps a person alive. When a person dies, we say that his Pran has left his body. It is often used as a synonym for life-forces in a body. It also refers to consciousness because when a man loses his consciousness he is as good as dead. The other winds are part of this primary Pran wind, and play different roles in the body. For example, the Apaana wind makes the bowels move downwards and out of the anus, and if it is not properly controlled then the person is subjected to what is called gastric problems and irritable bowel syndrome. Similarly, the Udaana wind resides in the joints, hips etc, and makes a person move. When it is disturbed, the person becomes restless, forcing him to go here and there in an aimless way; it makes the joints stiff, resulting in diseases such as gout, rheumatism etc., it makes him have wild dreams and unattainable aims. The Samaana wind maintains equilibrium in the body and its fluids, muscles, veins and arteries. The Vyaana wind controls voice and the head region because it is located in the throat, mouth, nose, ears, eyes etc., and a disturbance causes blurred vision, ear problems such as noises etc., chronic catarrhal conditions of the nose and throat, choking and sore throat etc.

This 'vital wind' called Pran is one of the five elements of creation, called the Panch Bhuts, the others being earth, water, fire and sky.

A detailed analysis of the different types of the wind elements and their functions have been given in the following Upanishads:

(i) Sam Veda—Chandogya Upanishad in its Canto 3, sections 13; Canto 5, section 1, verse nos. 6-15; Canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied; it also enumerates the Mantras pertaining to the five Prans); and Canto 7, section 15, verse no. 1; Jabal Darshan panishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 23-34; Maitrayanu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 6-7 (which describes the functions of these winds).

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—Subalo Upanishad, Canto 9, verse nos. 1-14; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3; Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 5, 8-9; Canto 2, verse nos. 54, 77-87; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 26; Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 3; Canto 4, Brahman 2, verse no. 4; Canto 5, Brahman 13; Canto 6, Brahman 1.

(iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 55^{1/2}-60, 95-100; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 28; Amritnada-panishad, verse no. 33-38; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 17-19; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 165-166, and Canto 5, verse no. 2; Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 3, Anuvak 3, 7; Kathopanishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 10; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 2 (especially describes the three methods to control the Prans); Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 11-12, 14-17 (which describe the fingers that are directly related to the five principal winds and the Mantras of these winds).

(iv) Atharva Veda—Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 10 (that says that Pran controls all the activities of the body); Canto 4, verse nos. 42-43 (that say that the Chitta Vrittis inspire the Prans to become active), 85-89 (that say that control of Pran is

equivalent to control of Vasanas, and briefly outline the methods by which Pran can be controlled); Canto 5, verse nos. 25-32, 50-53 (its verse nos. 52-53 aver that for a self-realised ascetic, the terms Pran and consciousness are the same); Prashna Upanishad, Canto 2-3; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 4; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 12-13; Atma Upanishad, verse no. 18 (says that the body is kept active by the vital winds); Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 2 (the 4 aspects of Pran; that Pran moves through four Naadis); Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2/21-25.

(v) These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 38-39.

The importance of the control of the Pran, Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) and Vasanas (inherent passions and desires) has been stressed in the Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 41-92, and in Canto 5, verse nos. 40, 43.]

Verse no. 20:

**अकरोदचिरेश्वरः क्षितौ दिवषदारम्भफलानि भस्मसात्
इतरो दहने स्वकर्मणाम् ववृते ज्ञानमयेन वह्निना॥ ८-२०**

akarodacireśvaraḥ kṣitau dviṣadārambhaphalāni bhasmasāt|
itaro dahane svakarmanām vavṛte jñānamayena vahninā || 8-20

8-20. The newly appointed wise king Aja used his wisdom and tact to destroy all conspiracies and malicious efforts of his enemies to bring them under his control and reduce all opposition to him to ashes, thereby establishing peace and stability in his realm, while the erstwhile illustrious king Raghu used wisdom, gnosis and spiritual knowledge to destroy all the accumulated negative effects of his deeds done earlier and reduce them to ashes, to establish peace and stability for himself.

Verse no. 21:

**पणबन्धमुखान्गुणानजः षडुपायुङ्क्त समीक्ष्य तत्फलम्
रघुरप्यजयत्गुणत्रयम् प्रकृतिस्थम् समलोष्टकाञ्चनः॥ ८-२१**

paṇabandhamukhānguṇānajaḥ ṣaḍupāyauṅkta samīkṣya tatphalam|
raghurapyajayatguṇatrayam prakṛtiṣṭham samaloṣṭakāñcanaḥ || 8-21

8-21. While on the one hand king Aja employed the six expedients of statecraft and diplomatic tools, such as Sandhi, Vighraḥ, Aasana, Yaana, Aasraya and Dwaidibhaava¹, to rule his kingdom in an orderly manner, and control other kings without causing friction, on the other hand his father king Raghu, who was of a compassionate and magnanimous nature, treating soil and gold (i.e. the humble and ordinary as well as the valuable and important components) equally with great dispassion and without discrimination or bias of any kind, too established a benchmark for wisdom, principled actions and noble

outlook that makes a king great and renowned by conquering (i.e. being able to control; by maintaining a balanced approach towards) the three fundamental components or primary elements of Nature, viz. Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas².

{King Aja employed tools of diplomacy to control his opponents in an amiable manner, and strike a balance between various forces to maintain peace and stability. His father Raghu too employed metaphysical knowledge and tools of wisdom to maintain neutrality and balance over the three fundamental Gunas or qualities in this world, such as the Sata, the Raja and the Tama Gunas to maintain peace and stability.}

[Note—¹According to Kautilya Artha Shastra, there are six diplomatic tools of foreign policy that a wise king employs while dealing with other states. These are the following: (i) Sandhi—i.e. truce or treaty of peace and friendship; (ii) Vigraha—i.e. war to subdue offending kings; (iii) Asana—i.e. neutrality, staying quiet, or measured indifference or non-alignment; (iv) Yaana—i.e. signs of preparing for war, though only to create pressure on the opposite state, by ordering the army to march towards the borders of the other king as a show of strength or force as a means of issuing a subtle threat of invasion and forced occupation to subdue the opposing king so that he makes peace and submits; (v) Asraya—i.e. an alliance of some sort; to strike a deal for mutual benefit; (vi) and Dwaidibhaava—i.e. double dealing; making peace with one opponent to seek his support while waging war with another; or making peace with one state while a raging war goes on with another state so that the king does not have to face two wars and opponents at the same time; or showing gestures of peace and compromise on the one hand while continuing to wage a war on the other hand.

²The 3 Gunas: The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three celebrated primary qualities called the Gunas. They are Sata, Raja and Tama. These three Gunas or qualities are the characteristics that determine a person's attitude and behaviour, as well as the way he would deal with a given situation and tackle different circumstances.

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life. It is this best quality marked by righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, truthfulness and good conduct.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the *Satwic* qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The *Vasanas* that have the *Rajasic Guna* or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with *Satwic* quality.

The *Raja Guna* is a bit lower quality where desires pertaining to the material world dominates a person's mind.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three *Gunas*. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of *Tama Guna* has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

This is the worst and the lowest kind of quality marked by passion, greed, corruption, deceit, un-truthfulness and moral turpitude.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The *Tamsic Guna* or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The *Vasanas* that have the *Tama Guna* in dominance are regarded as the 'bad *Vasanas*' or better still the 'worst type of *Vasana*' that any individual can have.

These *Gunas*, in varying ratios and mixtures, decide the character and personality of any given unit of creation. In modern world we recognize them as the 'gene' special to that individual, the 'gene' which makes each individual so unique in this creation. These *Gunas* can also be compared to the various shades and hues of colours that a painter uses to paint a picture or a portrait and inject life and uniqueness to it. Even the same painter cannot duplicate exactly a picture again—there is bound to be a difference between any

two pictures or portraits no matter how invisible, imperceptible, microscopic and subtle it might be.

Reference to the three types of Gunas has been made in Goswami Tulsidas' classic Story of Lord Ram, known as 'Ram Charit Manas', in its following verses:

Ram Charit Manas, (i) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 104 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 6; (iii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 21.

A large number of Upanishads deal with the concept of the three Gunas. They are the following: (i) Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 2 of the Atharva Veda; (ii) Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 6, paragraph no. 7; (iii) Devi Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 18; (iv) Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Kanda 1, verse no. 9; (v) Naradparivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 77; (vi) Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 3, verse no. 1; (vii) Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 116; (viii) Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 7-13; (ix) Paingal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 3-9, Canto 2, verse no. 3; (x) Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 6, verse no. 16; (xi) Maitrayanyu Upanishad, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition; (xii) Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse no. 2; (xiii) Chandogya Upanishad, 3/5/4-3/9 and 6/3-4 of the Sam Veda; (xiv) Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 9-13; (xv) Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 116.]

Verse no. 22:

**न नवः प्रभुराफलोदयात्स्थिरकर्मा विरराम कर्मणः।
न च योगविधेर्नवेतरः स्थिरधीरापरमात्मदर्शनात्॥ ८-२२**

na navah prabhurāphalodayātsthirakarmā virarāma karmanah|
na ca yogavidhernavetarah sthiradhīraparamātmadarśanāt || 8-22

8-22. King Aja remained committed to his duties and continued his endeavours till the desired results or rewards were obtained, and never left things half-done, lost patience or courage.

Similarly, his illustrious father Raghu diligently pursued his spiritual objectives till he attained emancipation and salvation for his soul, and was able to merge his soul with the Supreme Soul of this creation; he never lost patience or courage if the result was not obtained quickly because he understood that such endeavours take time to bear fruits.

Verse no. 23:

**इति शत्रुषु चेन्द्रियेषु च प्रतिषिद्धप्रसरेषु जाग्रतौ।
प्रसितावुदयापवर्गयोरुभयीम् सिद्धिमुभाववापतुः॥ ८-२३**

iti śatruṣu cendriyeṣu ca pratiṣiddhaprasareṣu jāgratau|
prasiṭāvudayāpavargayorubhayīm siddhimubhāvavāpatuḥ || 8-23

8-23. In this way, both the father and the son, i.e. the elderly monarch Raghu and the young king Aja, worked diligently to attain success in their endeavours. While Raghu strived continuously to remain steady on his spiritual path leading to Moksha (liberation and deliverance of his soul), his son king Aja, who was fully aware of his duties and responsibilities, strived to govern the kingdom most judiciously and in an orderly manner, gaining respect from all quarters, and enjoying loyalty of his subjects as well as obedience from his enemies and the smaller princes under his domain.

Verse no. 24:

अथ काश्चिदजव्यपेक्षया गमयित्वा समदर्शनः समाः|
तमसः परमापदव्ययम् पुरुषम् योगसमाधिना रघुः॥ ८-२४

atha kāścidajavyapekṣayā gamayitvā samadarśanaḥ samāḥ|
tamaśaḥ paramāpadavyayam puruṣam yogasamādhinā raghuḥ || 8-24

8-24. Living for some more years on the request of his son Aja, the elderly Raghu, who had always treated everything with equanimity, finally took leave of everyone and left his mortal body by the power of Yoga (meditating while stopping his winds from flowing inside the body) to attain oneness with the Supreme Being (i.e. he died, attaining liberation and deliverance from this mortal world.)

Verse no. 25:

श्रुतदेहविसर्जनः पितृश्चिरमश्रूणि विमुच्य राघवः|
विदधे विधिमस्य नैष्ठिकम् यतिभिः सार्धमनग्निरग्नचित्॥ ८-२५

śrutadehavisarjanaḥ pituṣcīramaśrūṇi vimucya rāghavaḥ|
vidadhe vidhimasya naiṣṭhikam yatibhiḥ sārddhamanagniragnicit || 8-25

8-25. When king Aja, who regularly performed the fire sacrifice, learnt that his father has died, he wept bitterly. After initial mourning, he buried his father's mortal remains instead of cremating it, because this is the sanctioned way for a Sanyasi's dead body (as clearly emphasised in the Jabala Upanishad which outlines the difference between a Sanyasi and a householder).

[Note--The dead body of a Sanyasi (a renunciate; a hermitt) is typically buried and not cremated in a fire, the latter being the process followed for a householder's dead body. During this burial process, the body is lowered into a pit in a sitting posture, usually facing north, resembling a posture of eternal meditation. It is called 'Bhu-Samadhi', i.e.

burial in the earth. The Sanyasi's staff and other meagre belongings are also buried alongside the body. The followers of the Sanyasi would often times raise a small memorial or tomb over the burial site, and regular worship is offered to the enlightened soul.

It is believed that since a Sanyasi has already purified his Atma or soul by doing meditation and living a life of renunciation, his body does not need further purification by burning it in the fire as no worldly negatives cling to it, as opposed to a normal householder's body. Further, the Samadhi or the tomb becomes a source of inspiration for others; people worship there and offer flowers and incense sticks to seek the enlightened Sanyasi's blessings.]

Verse no. 26:

अकरोत्स तदौर्ध्वदैहिकम् पितृभक्त्या पितृकार्यकल्पवित्।
न हि तेन पथा तनुत्यजस्तनयावर्जितपिण्डकाङ्क्षिणः॥ ८-२६

akarotsa tadaurdhvadaihiham pitrbhaktyā pitrkāryakalpavit।
na hi tena pathā tanutyajastanayāvarjitapiṇḍakāṅkṣiṇaḥ || 8-26

8-26. Even though Yogis (an ascetic; a mystic) who leave their mortal coils by following the process of Yoga (meditation and concentration on the pure 'self', the pure Consciousness; control of the wind forces inside the body and wilfully exiting their bodies to attain emancipation and salvation for their soul) do not need other rituals for liberation and deliverance, still out of love for his father and to conform to worldly standards whereby a son is expected to perform certain rituals such as 'Pinda Daan', king Aja dutifully did every ritual for his late father.

[Note--The Pinda Daan is a sacred Hindu rite for a dead person, usually done by his son to ensure that the departed soul attains liberation and deliverance from this mortal world in an orderly fashion, and attains peace in the after-life. The 'Pinda' is a ball made of rice, barley, sesame seeds and honey, and it represents the physical body of the dead person, while word 'daan' means to make a selfless and charitable offering for the benefit of the departed soul. Its kind of bidding a final farewell to one's loved one.

Further, when a person gives away anything as donation or 'daan', then he has no right or claim over it; he is supposed to break all relations with the thing given away as 'daan'. So likewise, once the 'Pinda Daan' rite is done, there remains no relationship between the father and the son as we understand it in the worldly context. All filial and worldly ties are snapped.]

Verse no. 27:

स परार्ध्यगतेरशोच्यताम् पितुरुद्दिश्य सदर्थवेदिभिः।
शमिताधिरधिज्यकार्मुकः कृतवानप्रतिशासनम् जगत्॥ ८-२७

sa parārdhyagateraśocyatām pituruddiśya sadarthavedibhiḥ|
śamitādhiradhijyakārmukaḥ kṛtavānapratiśāsanam jagat || 8-27

8-27. When learned and elderly scholars told king Aja that his late father has attained emancipation and salvation for his soul, attaining the highest state of eternal bliss by merging his soul with the Supreme Soul, the Parmatma, Aja was somehow consoled. They told him that there is no purpose served in grieving for his father who has attained the best and the highest destiny that a person can hope to achieve. So therefore, it would be wise to overcome grief and return to normal life.

King Aja thereafter calmed down and went about the daily affairs of life and duties of the kingdom. He kept the past behind him, and with a bow in his hand he established an unchallenged reign over the vast empire.

Verse no. 28:

क्षितिरिन्दुमती च भामिनी पतिमासाद्य तमग्र्यपौरुषम्|
प्रथमा बहुरत्नसूरभूदपरा वीरमजीजनत्सुतम्॥ ८-२८

kṣitirindumatī ca bhāminī patimāsādya tamagryapauruṣam|
prathamā bahuratnasūrabhūdaparā vīramajījanatsutam || 8-28

8-28. Both Indumati and Earth felt happy to have Aja as their king and lord. While Earth expressed her joy by producing an abundance of wealth such as gems and other natural products (such as agricultural produce, fruits, lakes and rivers full of clean water, trees for firewood and construction material, greenery etc), Indumati expressed her joy by giving birth to a valiant son.

Verse no. 29:

दशरश्मिशतोपमद्युतिम् यशसा दिक्षु दशस्वपि श्रुतम्|
दशपूर्वरथम् यमाख्यया दशकण्ठारिगुरुम् विदुर्बुधाः॥ ८-२९

daśaraśmiśatopamadyutim yaśasā dikṣu daśasvapi śrutam|
daśapūrvaratham yamākhyayā daśakaṇṭhārigurum vidurbudhāḥ || 8-29

8-29. The son of king Aja was named 'Dasrath' as it symbolises his greatness and fame. The word has two parts--viz. Dasha and Ratha. Dasha means 'ten', and Ratha means a 'chariot'. Hence, this son's fame would spread in all the ten directions of the world like the radiance of the Sun-God riding his celestial chariot, and in due course of time he would become a father of a great prince (Lord Ram) who would be instrumental in eliminating the ten-headed demon king named Ravana.

[Note--The ten directions of the world are the following: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

Verse no. 30:

ऋषिदेवगणस्वधाभुजाम् श्रुतयागप्रसवैः स पार्थिवः।
अनृणत्वमुपेयिवान्बभौ परिधेर्मुक्त इवोष्णदीधितिः॥ ८-३०

r̥ṣidevagaṇasvadhābhujām śrutayāgaprasavaiḥ sa pārthivah।
anr̥ṇatvamupeyivānbabhau paridhermukta ivoṣṇadīdhitih || 8-30

8-30. In this way, king Aja achieved freedom from all his worldly and moral obligations, such as his debts to sages by studying the Vedas and other scriptures under their guidance and in return giving them liberal donations as their fees, his debts to gods and deities by the means of performing fire sacrifices and making libations to them as offering, and to his father and ancestors by begetting a competent son (named Dasrath).

Having thus attained freedom from all his obligations, king Aja shone like a dazzling sun freed from a halo.

[Note--The sun has no halo around it when the sky is clear. Such a halo is formed around the sun when the sunlight is refracted or bent through and reflected by thousands of tiny hexagonal ice crystals suspended in high altitude cirrus clouds, roughly around 20,000 feet high above the ground. These ice crystals act as prisms that bend the sun's rays and separates its colours. This halo is seen as a white ring around the disc of the sun, and always has an average radius of 22 degrees around the sun.

Another reason for the formation of the halo is a dust-laden high altitude cloud that precedes storms. When the sun's light falls on this layer of cloud it also assumes a circular form that appears like a ring around the sun when viewed from earth.]

Verse no. 31:

बलमार्तभयोपशान्तये विदुषाम् सत्कृतये बहु श्रुतम्।
वसु तस्य विभोर्न केवलम् गुणवत्तापि परप्रयोजना॥ ८-३१

balamārtabhayopasāntaye viduṣām satkṛtaye bahu śrutam।
vasu tasya vibhorna kevalam guṇavattāpi paraprayanā || 8-31

8-31. King Aja's wealth, powers and strength were used to give protection to the downtrodden, the humble and the weak, as well as to honour scholars who devoted their energy and time in the study of scriptures. {To wit, Aja granted support to the weak and the humble, and ensured that no one tormented them. At the same time, he ensured that scholars and even ordinary students get enough financial support so that their studies are not interrupted because of lack of resources.}

In this way, king Aja's wealth as well as his strength and powers were employed for the welfare of others. This was the one of greatest goodness in his character.

Verse no. 32:

स कदाचिदवेक्षितप्रजः सह देव्या विजहार सुप्रजाः।
नगरोपवने शचीसखो मरुताम् पालयितेव नन्दने॥ ८-३२

sa kadācidavekṣitaprajāḥ saha devyā vijahāra suprajāḥ।
nagaropavane śacīsakho marutām pālayiteva nandane || 8-32

8-32. One day, king Aja-- who was blessed with an excellent son (named Dasrath), and who was renowned for his benevolent nature and for taking good care of the subjects of his kingdom-- was enjoying some private time with his queen Indumati in the royal garden, just like Indra, the king of gods, enjoys time with his consort Indrani (also known as Sachi) in the heavenly garden called Nandan Vana.

Verse no. 33:

अथ रोधसि दक्षिणोदधेः श्रितगोकर्णनिकेतमीश्वरम्।
उपवीणयितुम् ययौ रवेरुदयावृत्तिपथेन नारदः॥ ८-३३

atha rodhasi dakṣiṇodadheḥ śritagokarṇaniketamīśvaram।
upavīṇayitum yayau raverudayāvṛttipathena nāradaḥ || 8-33

8-33. Just at that time, the celestial sage Narad was going by the path of the sky to a place called Gokarna on the shore of the southern ocean to sing some songs on his Indian Lute (a stringed musical instrument resembling a modern guitar, or the Indian version of the harp) for the amusement of Lord Shiva.

Verse no. 34:

कुसुमैर्ग्रथितामपार्थिवैः स्रजमातोद्यशिरोनिवेशिताम्।
अहरत्किल तस्य वेगवानधिवासस्पृहयेव मारुतः॥ ८-३४

kusumairgrathitāmāpārthivaiḥ srajamātodyaśironiveśitām।
aharatkila tasya vegavānadhivāsaśprṛhayeva mārutaḥ || 8-34

8-34. Narad had wrapped a garland made of heavenly creepers with fragrant flowers growing on them on the upper end of the lute as he wended his way to Lord Shiva's place. As he was passing in the sky above the royal garden where king Aja and queen Indumati were spending some time in amusement, a strong wind blew, and in that gust the garland got detached from the lute and flew away. It seemed that the Wind-God wanted to take that fragrant garland and wrap it around himself.

Verse no. 35:

भ्रमरैः कुसुमानुसारिभिः परिकीर्णा परिवादिनी मुनेः।
ददृशे पवनापलेपजम् सृजती बाष्पमिवाञ्जनाविलम्॥ ८-३५

bhramaraiḥ kusumānusāribhiḥ parikīrṇā parivādinī muneḥ|
dadṛśe pavanāpalepajam sṛjati bāṣpamivāñjanāvilam || 8-35

8-35. Though the fragrant garland got dislodged from Narad's lute, yet the swarms of black bees that had been hovering over its flowers in search of scented nectar, continued the hover over the lute agitatedly. It appeared that the lute was feeling sad and insulted by the Wind-God, and in grief was shedding tears that were laced with the black eye-ointment called mascara that is usually worn by dancers and singers when going to entertain someone.

[Note--The black bees surrounded the lute from all sides, and some of them even pursued the garland as it flew away in the wind. For an onlooker it appeared that the swarm of black bees still hovering around the lute, as well as the stream of black bees that pursued the garland as it blew away from the lute, were respectively like the tears blackened by the eye-ointment that were being shed by the lute at the loss of the garland, and the stream of black bees rushing after the blown away garland was like a stream of such darkened tears flowing out and dropping from the eyes of the lute as it longingly looked at the garland blowing away from it.]

Verse no. 36:

अभिभूय विभूतिमार्तवीम् मधुगन्धातिशयेन वीरुधाम्।
नृपतेरमरस्रगाप सा दयितोरुस्तनकोटिसुस्थितीम्॥ ८-३६

abhibhūya vibhūtimārtavīm madhugandhātīśayena vīrudhām|
nṛpateramarasragāpa sā dayitorustanakoṭisusthitīm || 8-36

8-36. The beautiful garland formed from heavenly creepers laden with fragrant flowers that adorned the heavenly sage Narad's lute was wonderful in nature. It far surpassed the beauty, the magnificence and the fragrance of all the creepers and the flowers that one would find on earth. As the wind carried aloft this garland, it flew for sometimes in the sky and finally landed on the two well-formed bosoms of Indumati, king Aja's beloved queen.

Verse no. 37:

क्षणमात्रसखीम् सुजातयोः स्तनयोस्तामवलोक्य विह्वला।
निमिमील नरोत्तमप्रिया हतचन्द्रा तमसेव कौमुदी॥ ८-३७

kṣaṇamātrasakhīm sujātayoḥ stanayostāmavalokya vihvalā |
nimimīla narottamapriyā hṛtacandrā tamaseva kaumudī || 8-37

8-37. As soon as Indumati saw the garland on her bosoms, she was extremely shocked and closed her eyes in agitation even as her face became pale, and she swooned and fell down unconscious. It was like the case of a full moon losing its shine when it sees Rahu, the severed head of a demon by that name, who periodically comes to the moon to devour it, causing the moon to lose its shine, which in turn causes the lunar eclipse (according to Hindu mythology).

[Note--No sooner did Indumati see that heavenly garland lying on her bosom, she fainted and passed away. Why it happened has been narrated in verse nos. 71-82 herein below. Meanwhile, the woeful, pathetic and distressed condition of Aja, and how he soulfully grieved for his beloved queen Indumati, has been poetically and wonderfully described in verse nos. 41-70 that follow herein below.]

Verse no. 38:

वपुषा करणोज्झितेन सा निपतन्ती पतिमप्यपातयत् |
ननु तैलनिषेकबिन्दुना सह दीपार्चिरुपैति मेदिनीम् ॥ ८-३८

vapuṣā karaṇojjhiteṇa sā nipatantī patimapyapātayat |
nanu tailaniṣekabindunā saha dīpārcirupaiti medinīm || 8-38

8-38. When Indumati fell down unconscious on the ground, she made Aja too follow her example--i.e. when Indumati fell down lifeless, Aja also swooned and fell down on her. Is it not that when a burning wick of a lamp soaked in oil is unable to stay erect and bends down, then its flame too follows suit and bends down to finally get extinguished?

[Note--In this analogy, Indumati is likened to the wick and Aja to the flame. Both the wick and the flame live a life of partnership; the wick is useless if there is no flame, and the flame needs the wick to show its light. When the wick falls down, the flame too falls down. When Aja saw his beloved wife fall down lifeless, he was so shocked and distressed that he swooned and fell down unconscious on the body of Indumati. But while Indumati had died, Aja only lost consciousness for a while, and regained his senses soon to lament distressfully and soulfully for his dead beloved wife. They were a happily married couple who were very close to each other, and if one partner was dead, the other found life nothing but a bag of sorrows and a useless burden.]

Verse no. 39:

उभयोरपि पार्श्ववर्तिनाम् तुमुलेनार्तरवेण वेजिताः |
विहगाः कमलाकरालयाः समदुःखा इव तत्र चुक्रुशुः ॥ ८-३९

ubhayorapi pārśvavartinām tumulenārtaraveṇa vejitāḥ|
vihagāḥ kamalākarālayāḥ samaduḥkhā iva tatra cukruśuḥ || 8-39

8-39. With loud cries of the attendants of Aja and Indumati who loudly lamented at the condition of their lord and mistress, even the birds in the garden, including the water fowls in the ponds full of lotus flowers, felt agitated, and they raised their voices in shrill cries as if to express solidarity with them.

Verse no. 40:

नृपतेर्व्यजनादिभिस्तमो नुनुदे सा तु तथैव संस्थिता|
प्रतिकारविधानमायुषः सति शेषे हि फलाय कल्पते॥ ८-४०

nṛpatervyajanādibhistamo nunude sā tu tathaiva saṁsthitā|
pratikāravidhānamāyusaḥ sati śeṣe hi phalāya kalpate || 8-40

8-40. The fainted king Aja was somehow revived back to life by waving hand-held fans and sprinkling cool water on him, but all attempts to revive Indumati failed, because remedies and remedial methods work only till the time there is life inside the body, but as soon as the body becomes dead, nothing works.

Verse no. 41:

प्रतियोजयितव्यवल्लकीसमवस्थामथ सत्त्वविप्लवात्|
स निनाय नितान्तवत्सलः परिगृह्योचितमङ्कमङ्गनाम्॥ ८-४१

pratiyojayitavyavallakīsamavasthāmatha sattvaviplavāt|
sa nināya nitāntavatsalaḥ parigrhyocitamāṅkamaṅganām || 8-41

8-41. Then king Aja, who loved his wife extremely dearly and was over-stricken with grief when he found her lying lifeless before him, lifted her limp body and placed it lovingly on his lap just like a musician keeps a lute on his lap in order to tune its strings.

Verse no. 42:

पतिरङ्कनिषण्णया तया करणापायविभिन्नवर्णया|
समलक्ष्यत बिभ्रदविलाम् मृगलेखामुषसीव चन्द्रमाः॥ ८-४२

patiraṅkanīṣaṇṇayā tayā karaṇāpāyavibhinnavarṇayā|
samalakṣyata bibhradāvilām mṛgalekhāmuṣasīva candramāḥ || 8-42

8-42. With a lifeless and pale body of Indumati lying on his lap, king Aja reminded one of the morning moon whose shining disc seems to have faded in its colour and on whose surface is visible a paled outline of a deer.

[Note--The moon loses its brilliance at dawn. The dark shadows on its surface are likened to the shadow of a deer, because like the beauty of the moon, a deer is also regarded as a beautiful animal. Poets say that the moon has a deer resting on its lap and it is seen as a dark shadow on the moon's surface. As the shine of the moon's disc begin to fade in the morning, the dark shadow on its surface, that the poets compare to a deer, also begins to fade away.]

Verse no. 43:

विललाप स बाष्पगद्गदम् सहजामप्यपहाय धीरताम्
अभितप्तमयोऽपि मार्दवम् भजते कैव कथा शरीरिषु॥ ८-४३

vilalāpa sa bāṣpagadgadāṁ saha-jāmapyapahāya dhīratām|
abhitaptamayo'pi mārḍavam bhajate kaiva kathā śarīriṣu || 8-43

8-43. King Aja who was known for his firmness and stable mind, one who never yielded to emotions and treated all circumstances with equanimity, suddenly lost his composure and wept bitterly. Overcome with grief, he lamented sorely. Say, when even iron which is considered so strong and hard, melts down when heated to high temperatures under pressure, there is no wonder that a human being, no matter how stern and resilient he may be, would yield and break down under distress when subjected to great emotional pressure and the heat of grief.

[Note--Iron is very strong, hard, and not easily melted. It may become very hot to touch, but would not melt. It melts only when heated to high temperatures under pressure. So likewise, king Aja who was known for his mental equilibrium and resilient nature, who would rarely show any emotions no matter how adverse the situation may be, suddenly buckled down under emotional stress and broke down like a child--weeping, lamenting and grieving for his beloved wife Indumati who was no more.]

Verse no. 44:

कुसुमान्यपि गात्रसंगमात्प्रभवन्त्यायुरपोहितुम् यदि
न भविष्यति हन्त साधनम् किमिवान्यत्प्रहरिष्यतो विधेः॥ ८-४४

kusumānyapi gātrasaṁgamātpṛbhavantyāyurapohitum yadi|
na bhaviṣyati hanta sādhanam kimivānyatpṛharīṣyato vidheḥ || 8-44

8-44. While lamenting and grieving mournfully, king Aja exclaimed: "Alas! If such a soft and delicate thing as a flower is capable of killing a person and taking away life instantly

by mere contact, then say what is the need for the cruel god of death and the deity of destiny of using other means (such as a weapon, poison, fire, disease etc.) to kill a person?

[Note--If the god of death can kill a person by flowers, then why does he use so many other tormenting means to kill him? It means that the god of death is extremely cruel and relishes when the person is subjected to torments before dying. If death can be made so smooth and comfortable, then what is the sense in tormenting a person targeted by the death-god to die? If the aim is causing death and not torture, then it makes no sense in employing any other means except the touch of a flower, so that the dying person can at least die peacefully.]

From this verse onwards till verse no. 70, it is a monologue of king Aja who is extremely distraught and anguished by his wife's sudden death. He broods and expresses his distress at the misfortunes that befall a man on the cruel commands of the god of destiny who is merciless and without emotions.]

Verse no. 45:

अथवा मृदु वस्तु हिंसितुम् मृदुनैवारभते प्रजान्तकः।
हिमसेकविपत्तिरत्र मे नलिनी पूर्वनिदर्शनम् मता॥ ८-४५

athavā mṛdu vastu hīnsitum mṛdunaivārabhate prajāntakaḥ।
himasekavipattiratra me nalinī pūrvanidarśanam matā || 8-45

8-45. It is possible that the god of death uses a means or a tool of causing death according to the nature of the person concerned. If the targeted person is delicate, beautiful and humble, he would use soft and beautiful means to bring about the person's death (as is the case with Indumati, for she was so delicate that the god of death had mercy on her and used flowers, which are inherently soft and delicate, to bring about her death, instead of employing any harsh method). It is like the case of the wilting and dying of lotus under frost.

[Note--Lotus flowers die in frost, and the death-god need not use harsher methods such as hail to kill it. This is the first example cited as an illustration to show that though it appears that the god of death is harsh and merciless, it is not actually so. That is why, says Aja, the death-god used flowers to kill Indumati instead of employing any other harsher method. Everything, every person and every entity in this mortal world has to die; how death is brought about is a matter contemplation.]

Verse no. 46:

सगियम् यदि जीवितापहा हृदये किम् निहिता न हन्ति माम्।
विषमप्यमृतम् क्वचिद्वेदमृतम् वा विषमीश्वरेच्छया॥ ८-४६

sragiyam yadi jīvitāpahā hr̥daye kim nihitā na hanti mām|
viṣamapyamṛtam kvacidbhavedamṛtam vā viṣamīśvarecchayā || 8-46

8-46. If a garland has the potential to kill someone, then why is the garland around my own neck not killing me? Surely, everything depends on the will of God, for if he so wishes than poison can become a life-giving potion, and even nectar can transform into poison if the Lord so wishes.

[Note--When death is to come, it will come. Even the best of medicines turn into poisons. On the contrary, if destiny so wishes that a person lives, than he would survive even by either not taking any medicine, or taking unnecessary medicines.]

Verse no. 47:

अथवा मम भाग्यविप्लवादशनिः कल्पित एव वेधसा|
यदनेन तरुर्न पातितः क्षपिता तद्विटपाश्रिता लता॥ ८-४७

athavā mama bhāgyaviplavādaśaniḥ kalpita eva vedhasā|
yadanena tarurna pātitaḥ kṣapitā tadviṭapāśritā latā || 8-47

8-47. It is also possible that the god of destiny had used this garland as a Vajra (thunderbolt) that was selective in its strike, as when it hit it did not fell down the tree representing my own self, but it struck down the poor creeper represented by Indumati who was dependent upon me for survival."

[Note--When lightening strikes during a fierce storm, it falls on a particular tree, reducing it to ashes, while other trees in the vicinity are left unharmed. Citing this natural phenomenon, Aja laments that the death-god used the garland as a strike of thunderbolt or a streak of lightening to strike at Indumati who was sitting close to him, but spared him from death.]

Verse no. 48:

कृतवत्यसि नावधीरणामपराद्धेऽपि यदा चिरम् मयि|
कथमेकपदे निरागसम् जनमाभाष्यमिमम् न मन्यसे॥ ८-४८

kṛtavatyasi nāvadhīraṇāmāparāddhe'pi yadā ciram mayi|
kathamekapade nirāgasam janamābhāṣyamimam na manyase || 8-48

8-48. Turning to Indumati who was lying lifeless across his lap, the distraught and grieving king Aja said: "When you had never spoken any harsh words to me or insulted me although I may have offended you many a times in life, then why have you suddenly stopped speaking to me; what great offence have I caused you that all of a sudden you

turned against me and stopped even talking with me as if you have decided to break all relationships or ties with me?

Verse no. 49:

ध्रुवमस्मि शठः शुचिस्मिते विदितः कैतववत्सलस्तव।
परलोकमसंनिवृत्तये यदनापृच्छय गतासि मामितः॥ ८-४९

dhruvamasmi śaṭhaḥ śucismite viditaḥ kaitavavatsalastava|
paralokamasannivṛttaye yadanāpṛcchya gatāsi māmitaḥ || 8-49

8-49. Oh my beloved who always had a polite smile on your face! It appears that you have concluded that my love for you was false and only for show, that I was only feigning love for you instead of being sincere about it, and it is this reason why you have decided to bid farewell to me and leave for the other world.

Verse no. 50:

दयिताम् यदि तावदन्वगाद्विनिवृत्तम् किमिदम् तया विना।
सहताम् हतजीवितम् मम प्रबलामात्मकृतेन वेदनाम्॥ ८-५०

dayitām yadi tāvadanvagādvivinivṛttam kimidam tayā vinā|
sahatām hatajīvitam mama prabalāmātmakṛtena vedanām || 8-50

8-50. When I had also fainted at the time you had fainted, then why did not my accursed life leave me and accompany you to the other world; why did it return to make me regain consciousness and live a tormented life hereafter? I too should have died alongside you, but I am so cursed that I am now forced to live a life that would be nothing but a continuous torment for me. If this is my destiny, then let me suffer in perpetuity.

Verse no. 51:

सुरतश्रमसंभृतो मुखे ध्रियते स्वेदलवोद्गमोऽपि ते।
अथ चास्तमिता त्वमात्मना धिगिमाम् देहभृतामसारताम्॥ ८-५१

surataśramasāmbhṛto mukhe dhriyate svedalavodgamo'pi te|
atha cāstamitā tvamātmanā dhigimām dehabhṛtāmasāratām || 8-51

8-51. Sweat drops formed due to your passionate excitement during our coital union are still fresh on your face, but your life has left your body. Alas! Such is the transient nature of life of mortal beings that at one moment life seems to be full of zeal and excitement, and at the other moment everything is dead and gone. Such a split-second transition is mind-boggling and truly astonishing.

Verse no. 52:

मनसापि न विप्रियम् मया कृतपूर्वम् तव किम् जहासि माम्
ननु शब्दपतिः क्षितेरहम् त्वयि मे भावनिबन्धना रतिः॥ ८-५२

manasāpi na vipriyam mayā kṛtapūrvam tava kim jahāsi mām|
nanu śabdapatih kṣiteraham tvayi me bhāvanibandhanā ratiḥ || 8-52

8-52. I had never ever in my life even thought of doing anything that would not be liked by you; I had never ever thought any wrong about you. Then say dear, why have you left me (so suddenly, without even giving me a notice of your intention, and warning me about the wrong I had done which had touched you so badly that you have decided to abandon me and go away, leaving me distraught and grieving for no fault of mine)?

In fact, I am called the 'lord of this earth' because I am its monarch, but truly speaking my mind and love were focused on you. {To wit, I took care of the earth because I was a king and had to carry on with my duties, but my soul and thoughts were rather always with you. I thought of you always, and you had a permanent place in my heart. I could not spend much time with you in an exclusive manner because of my worldly responsibilities and duties, to the kingdom as well as to its subjects, but that did not mean I had neglected you in any manner whatsoever. My dear, my body though was engaged in carrying out my worldly duties, but my affection and devotion for you was unwavering and unquestioned.}

Verse no. 53:

कुसुमोत्खचितान्वलीभृतश्चलयन्भृङ्गरुचस्तवालकान्
करभोरु करोति मारुतस्त्वदुपावर्तनशङ्कि मे मनः॥ ८-५३

kusumotkhacitānvalībhṛtaścalayanbhrṅgarucastavālakān|
karabhoru karoti mārutastvadupāvartanaśaṅki me manaḥ || 8-53

8-53. Oh my dear with well-formed thighs that resemble a trunk (of a banana plant in its smoothness, and of an elephant in its muscular structure; ' karabhoru ')!¹ Your lock of long curly black hairs which are as black as a swarm of bees, and which are thickly intertwined with fragrant flowers, are still bristling in the soft breeze that blows now. When I look at them it makes me feel that you will come back to life soon, because I feel that you have merely dozed off due to tiredness, and would soon get up.

[Note--¹We must always remember that Kalidas was a poet of an era when poets relished describing the beauty of the female form in all its fineness and in intricate details so much so that often times it bordered on the erotica. Ancient poets wrote with a flair for description of beauty in all its nuances without reservations to bring out the inherent charm of the subject in their compositions. During this process, these poets employed

examples from nature to make the picture more clear, as is evident here when 'trunk' is cited. Now, the word 'trunk', when used to describe the beauty of a thigh, is obviously related to those elements in nature that would enable the reader to have a clear vision and conception of what the poet intends to say, hence a reference to the banana tree and the elephant, the former example to show how smooth it was, and the latter to impress how muscular it was. Therefore, this comparison of Indumati's thighs with the trunk of a banana plant or of an elephant is in order of that way and style of writing.

In this context, refer also to verse no. 57 herein below.]

Verse no. 54:

तदपोहितुमर्हसि प्रिये प्रतिबोधेन विषादमाशु मे।
ज्वलितेन गुहागतम् तमस्तुहिनाद्रेरिव नक्तमोषधिः॥ ८-५४

tadapohitumarhasi priye pratibodhena viṣādamāśu me।
jvalitena guhāgatam tamastuhinādreriva naktamoṣadhiḥ || 8-54

8-54. Therefore, oh my darling! Just like luminescent plants glow in the mountain sides and inside its caves to illuminate them by their soft light during the darkness of the night, so likewise I hope you too would gain the light of consciousness and remove the all-pervading darkness in my life by the brilliance of your charm.

[Note--Such plants that emit glow in the dark are called 'bioluminescent plants'. This glow is due to presence of phosphorus in some plants, as well as a reaction of two enzymes in some kinds of fungi and mushrooms. The glow appears due to a reaction of luciferin and luciferase enzymes which produce light instead of heat. An example is the plant called 'firefly petunia' as well as some species of mushrooms.

Glow caused by presence of phosphorus in the plant is called 'phosphorescence'--viz, evening primrose. During the daytime, the plants store sunlight by the process of photosynthesis, and in the night this stored energy is converted to soft light that permeates the whole plant.

Some examples of plants and flowers that appear to glow in the darkness of the night are firefly petunia, moonflower, foxfire, glowing moss, evening primrose.]

Verse no. 55:

इदमुच्छवसितालकम् मुखम् तव विश्रान्तकथम् दुनोति माम्।
निशि सुप्तमिवैकपङ्कजम् विरताभ्यन्तरषट्पदस्वनम्॥ ८-५५

idamucchvasitālakam mukham tava viśrāntakatham dunoti mām।
niśi suptamivaikapāṅkajam viratābhyantaraṣaṭpadasvanam || 8-55

8-55. Your charming face with curly hairs that sway around it in the soft breeze anguishes my heart as it reminds me of a shrivelled lotus flower in the night that has lost

its vibrancy and charm, and the bees that hover over it feel distraught when they find that the petals of the lotus are closed.

[Note--King Aja compares Indumati's face to a lotus flower, and the swaying curly hairs to the black bees that hover over a lotus flower in search of nectar even when its petals are closed in the night. When Indumati died, her eyes closed and her face became pale, resembling a lotus flower that shrivels and closes its petals in the night. Just like the case of the bees that had been flocking around the lotus when its petals were still open, and continue to buzz around the closed flower in the hope that its petals would open to give them access to its pollen, so likewise the curly black hairs on Indumati's head continued to sway in the breeze in the hope that she would open her eyes and come back to life.]

Verse no. 56:

शशिनम् पुनरेति शर्वरी दयिता द्वन्द्वचरम् पतत्रिणम्
इति तौ विरहान्तरक्षमौ कथमत्यन्तगता न माम् दहेः॥ ८-५६

śaśinam punareti śarvarī dayitā dvandvacaram patatriṇam|
iti tau virahāntarakṣamau kathamatyantagatā na mām daheḥ || 8-56

8-56. Oh my darling! Night regains access to the moon after the sun sets, and the loving pair of the birds known as Chakva and Chakvi (the male and the female bird called ruddy goose) regain access to each other as soon as the day arrives and the night sets. So therefore, their separation is temporary, and they find solace in the sure hope that after a little while they would be reunited with their partners with whom they like to coexist. But I have no such hope because you have gone to sleep forever (i.e. you have died). Say then, how do I find succour and solace from my torments; how do I smooth my heart and calm my mind?

[Note--There is a bond between the moon and the night and they act as partners because they coexist. Similarly, the Chakva and Chakvi form a pair that though separated during the night yet get reunited as soon as day breaks. Their union is therefore a certainty. But Aja laments that in his case, since Indumati has died, he has lost her forever. During their hours of separation, both the night and the moon, as well as the Chakva and the Chakvi find solace that after sometime they would be reunited with each other respectively, but in Aja's case this is not possible. So he woefully laments how will he survive the overwhelming grief when separated from his beloved for all times to come.]

Verse no. 57:

नवपल्लवसंस्तरेऽपि ते मृदु दूयेत यदङ्गमर्पितम्
तदिदम् विषहिष्यते कथम् वद वामोरु चिताधिरोहणम्॥ ८-५७

navapallavasamstare'pi te mṛdu dūyeta yadaṅgamarpitam|
tadidam viṣahiṣyate katham vada vāmoru citādhiraṇam || 8-57

8-57. Oh my dear who has pretty thighs (vāmoru)¹! Your soft and delicate body found it hard to rest on a bed of tender leaves, I wonder in great dismay how would it now cope with the harshness of the funeral pyre when made to lie down on it?

[Note--¹Refer also to verse no. 53 herein above.]

Verse no. 58:

इयमप्रतिबोधशायिनीम् रशना त्वाम् प्रथमा रहःसखी
गतिविभ्रमसादनीरवा न शुचा नानु मृतेव लक्ष्यते॥ ८-५८

iyamapratibodhaśāyinīm raśanā tvām prathamā rahaḥsakhī
gativibhramasādanīravā na śucā nānu mṛteva lakṣyate || 8-58

8-58. Seeing you lying immobile and lifeless, the waist-band or the girdle you wear, which had been your constant companion, feels extremely distraught and lonely as it was accustomed to seeing you moving majestically when it too swung in concert with your movements, but now with your body lying lifeless, the poor waist-band feels lifeless itself out of grief at your death.

[Note--The waist-band or the girdle which Indumati wore would move when she moved. It was her constant companion, day and night, and most close to her. King Aja laments that the girdle has lost her closest companion, and so it feels extremely sad and distraught. The girdle, by the way, is luckier than him, grieved Aja, because it still clings to Indumati's body and would not leave her; it would accompany her to the funeral pyre and onto the next world, which is not possible for him to do.]

Verse nos. 59-60:

कलमन्यभृतासु भासितम् कलहंसीषु मदालसम् गतम्
पृषतीषु विलोलमीक्षितम् पवनाधूतलतासु विभ्रमाः॥ ८-५९

त्रिदिवोत्सुकयाप्यवेक्ष्य माम् निहिताः सत्यममी गुणास्त्वया
विरहे तव मे गुरुव्यथम् हृदयम् न त्ववलम्बितुम् क्षमाः॥ ८-६०

kalamanyabhṛtāsu bhāsitam kalahaṁsīṣu madālasam gatam
pṛṣatīṣu vilolamikṣitam pavanādhūtalatāsu vibhramāḥ || 8-59

tridivotsukayāpyavekṣya mām nihitāḥ satyamamī guṇāstvayā
virahe tava me guruvyatham hṛdayam na tvalambitum kṣamāḥ || 8-60

8-59, 60. Oh my darling! While on your way to the heaven, you have left behind your sweet memory in the form of the pleasant singing of the cuckoo, the majestic slow

movement of the royal swans, the alluring rolling glances of the spotted deer, the gentle movement of the creepers swaying in a soft breeze, but none of them are, and would ever be, effective in soothing my tormented heart and assuaging my grief arising out of physical separation from you.

Verse no. 61:

**मिथुनम् परिकल्पितम् त्वया सहकारः फलिनी च नन्विमौ।
अविधाय विवाहसत्क्रियामनयोर्गम्यत इत्यसांप्रतम्॥ ८-६१**

mithunam parikalpitam tvayā sahakārah phalinī ca nanvimau|
avidhāya vivāhasatkriyāmanayorgamyata ityasāṁpratam || 8-61

8-61. Oh dear! You had treated this mango tree and the creeper wrapped around it as an inseparable pair, and had planned to organise a formal ceremony to formalise this union. But unfortunately, you are going away without giving effect to your plan.

[Note--As a pastime and a plaything, Indumati had planned to organise a marriage ceremony of the mango tree and the creeper. Metaphorically, the mango tree represents king Aja, and the creeper, Indumati. She had wished to organise such a ceremony to commemorate their own marriage. But fate decided against it.]

Verse no. 62:

**कुसुमम् कृतदोहदस्त्वया यदशोकोऽयमुदीरयिष्यति।
अलकाभरणम् कथम् नु तत्तव नेष्यामि निवापमाल्यताम्॥ ८-६२**

kusumam kṛtadohadastvayā yadaśoko'yamudīrayiṣyati|
alakābharaṇam katham nu tattava neṣyāmi nivāpamālyatām || 8-62

8-62. Oh my dear! The Ashoka tree which you used to touch with your toe had borne flowers that I used to adorn you with. Now say, with what heart would I use the same flowers to make a wreath during your funeral, or use them to offer final good-bye to you after the funeral rituals are over?

[Note--The Ashoka tree has flowers that are very large and beautifully diversified with tints of orange-scarlet, of pale yellow, and of bright orange, which form a variety of shades according to the age of the blossom. The name of this tree 'Ashoka' suggests that it removes all sorrows and grief. King Aja laments that the tree has gone against its own character of eliminating sorrows because whenever he would see it and its flowers, he would be overwhelmed with grief as it would remind him of Indumati, of how she loved its flowers, and how she enjoyed sitting under its shade. But he can't get the tree cut also, as it would be insulting to the memory of Indumati who loved its flowers as well as its

shade. The very sight of this Ashoka tree would now onwards be a constant source of torment, grief and pain to him.]

Verse no. 63:

स्मरतेव सशब्दनूपुरम् चरणानुग्रहमन्यदुर्लभम्|

अमुना कुसुमाश्रुवर्षिणा त्वमशोकेन सुगात्रि शोच्यसे॥ ८-६३

smarateva saśabdanūpuram caraṇānugrahamanyadurlabham|
amunā kusumāśruvarṣiṇā tvamaśokena sugātri śocyase || 8-63

8-63. Oh my charming dear (sugātri)! You had been of such a noble demeanour and so courteous with everyone that you had never touched anyone with your feet¹ from which emanated the pleasant sound of chiming anklets whenever you moved around. But this Ashoka tree was so fortunate that it had the privilege of being touched by your soft feet (when you tried to shake it in order to make its flowers fall down so that you can then pick them up to adorn yourself). Now the same tree grieves and mourns for you as it fondly remembers you and the soft touch of your delicate feet that it would miss now onwards, by weeping for you and shedding its flowers in great abundance as tears in a symbolic manner to express its grief and sadness of being forced to bear separation from you².

[Note—¹Touching anyone by one's own feet is regarded as rude and insulting to that person. Indumati was very careful in this regard. But she would sometimes touch the Ashoka tree with her feet in order to collect flowers that fell down from its branches.

²The poet says that the Ashoka tree felt very honoured by this touch because Indumati never touched any other tree with her feet. It is because she loved the flowers of the Ashoka tree and their colours and fragrance more than the flowers of any other tree; the Ashoka tree and its flowers were her favourite. Just like the heavens express their grief upon the death of some great person by making the clouds fall rain on earth to pay homage to the departed soul, the Ashoka tree too mourns this fine lady by shedding its flowers to pay homage to her.]

Verse no. 64:

तव निःश्वसितानुकारिभिर्बकुलैरर्धचिताम् समम् मया|

असमाप्य विलासमेखलाम् किमिदम् किन्नरकण्ठि सुप्यते॥ ८-६४

tava niḥśvasitānukāribhirbakulairardhacitām samam mayā|
asamāpya vilāsamekhalām kimidam kinnarakaṇṭhi supyate || 8-64

8-64. Oh dear who had a voice as melodious as the heavenly Kinnars (i.e. singers of heaven; 'kinnarakaṇṭhi')! The fragrant vakul flowers¹ that you had been threading with

me to form a flower waist-band is still lying unfinished. Say, why have you left it midway and gone to sleep; why have you not completed it?

[Note--¹The vakul flower is called Spanish Cherry, Medlar or Bullet Wood flower in English. Its botanical name is *Mimusops elengi*. It is a fragrant, star-shaped white flower of a evergreen tree. These flowers retain their sweet scent even after drying. In the vernacular Hindi language, it is called Maulsari.]

Verse no. 65:

समदुःखसुखः सखीजनः प्रतिपच्चन्द्रनिभोऽयमात्मजः।
अहमेकरसस्तथापि ते व्यवसायः प्रतिपत्तिनिष्ठुरः॥ ८-६५

samaduḥkhasukhaḥ sakhījanaḥ pratipaccandranibho'yamātmajaḥ|
ahamekarasastathāpi te vyavasāyaḥ pratipattiniṣṭhuraḥ || 8-65

8-65. Oh my dear! All your female companions who shared your joy and sorrows are present here, lamenting for you. The infant son who is innocent and growing up like a first-day's moon is here too, waiting for mother's love and care. And your eternal lover, myself who loves you dearly, is also present here, grieving at the abysmal void created by your absence. Then say, why have you been so cruel and stern-hearted as to abandon all of them and go to heaven? This action of yours of going to the heaven seems very cruel and uncharacteristic of you and your polite and amiable nature.

Verse no. 66:

धृतिरस्तमिता रतिश्च्युता विरतम् गेयमृतुर्निरुत्सवः।
गतमाभरणप्रयोजनम् परिशून्यम् शयनीयमद्य मे॥ ८-६६

dṛṭirastamitā ratiścyutā viratam geyamṛturnirutsavaḥ|
gatamābharaṇaprayojanam pariśūnyam śayanīyamadya me || 8-66

8-66. Oh my darling! Without you today, I have become agitated and distraught; all my happiness and joy have vanished; all entertainment such music and song has stopped; there is no charm in wearing ornaments anymore; and my bed has become vacant. What more can I say except that without you, everything is meaningless and useless.

Verse no. 67:

गृहिणी सचिवः सखी मिथः प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ।
करुणाविमुखेन मृत्युना हरता त्वाम् वद किम् न मे हृतम्॥ ८-६७

gṛhiṇī sacivaḥ sakhi mithaḥ priyaśiṣyā lalite kalāvidhau|
karuṇāvimukhena mṛtyunā haratā tvām vada kim na me hṛtam || 8-67

8-67. Oh dear! You were my beloved wife, my advisor, my companion and friend in private hours, and you were like my pupil whom I taught the intricate nuances of songs and other forms of fine art. Tell me yourself what the cruel god of death has not snatched from me by taking you away from me? {I have lost everything for which a man lives; what more is left in this world for me for which I would like to live? My life has turned into a huge void, a hollow, which can never be filled.}

Verse no. 68:

मदिराक्षि मदाननार्पितम् मधु पीत्वा रसवत्कथम् नु मे|
अनुपास्यसि बाष्पदूषितम् परलोकोपनतम् जलाञ्जलिम्॥ ८-६८

madirākṣi madānanārpitam madhu pītvā rasavatkatham nu me|
anupāsyasi bāṣpadūṣitam paralokopanatam jalāñjalim || 8-68

8-68. Oh my darling who used to enjoy sweet drinks with me! We used to sip the most delicious wine together from the same cup. But now, say, how will you enjoy in heaven a drink that would be brackish (salty) in taste as it would be laced with my tears of grief that I would shed in torrents here on earth while paying my last obeisance to you and weep in your memory?

Verse no. 69:

विभवेऽपि सति त्वया विना सुखमेतावदजस्य गण्यताम्|
अहृतस्य विलोभनान्तरैर्मम सर्वे विषयास्त्वदाश्रयाः॥ ८-६९

vibhave'pi sati tvayā vinā sukhametāvadajasya gaṇyatām|
ahr̥tasya vilobhanāntarairmama sarve viṣayāstvadāśrayāḥ || 8-69

8-69. Oh dear! In spite of possessing all the wealth and majesty in this world, the happiness of Aja has been reduced to dust as I do not love anything except you. Verily, you were the focus of all my happiness and joy; my happiness and joy entirely depended on you (and with you gone, how can I ever hope to feel happy and contented in life any longer?)"

Verse no. 70:

विलपन्निति कोसलाधिपः करुणार्थग्रथितम् प्रियाम् प्रति|
अकरोत्पृथिवीरुहानपि सुतशाखारसबाष्पदूषितान्॥ ८-७०

vilapanniti kosalādhīpaḥ karuṇārthagrahitam priyām prati|
akarotprthivīruhānapi srutaśākhārasabāṣpadūṣitān || 8-70

8-70. In this way, king Aja, the ruler of the kingdom of Kaushala, wept and lamented woefully for the loss of his beloved wife Indumati so much so that his tears wetted the ground around him, and the surrounding trees also joined him in his hour of grief by oozing sap that trickled down their trunks and branches in solidarity with Aja.

Verse no. 71:

अथ तस्य कथंचिदङ्कतः स्वजनस्तामपनीय सुन्दरीम्|
विससर्ज तदन्त्यमण्डनामनलायागुरुचन्दनैधसे॥ ८-७१

atha tasya kathamcidāṅkataḥ svajanastāmapanīya sundarīm|
visasarja tadantyaṃaṇḍanāmanalāyāgurucandanaidhase || 8-71

8-71. After that, the kinsmen of king Aja somehow comforted him and removed the dead body of the fair lady Indumati that had lay on his lap. Then they adorned her body with the same garland which had fallen from heaven and had led to her sudden death as it was regarded a link between her and the heaven, and finally all of them placed her mortal remains on the funeral pyre made of sandalwood and performed her last rites.

[Note--The close associates and kinsmen of Aja decided that the garland represented a call from heaven, and it would be appropriate to decorate her body with it before her cremation as it would burn with her mortal remains and symbolically accompany her to heaven from where it came.]

Verse no. 72:

प्रमदामनु संस्थितः शुचा नृपतिः सन्नपि वाच्यदर्शनात्|
न चकार शरीरमग्निसात्सह देव्या न तु जीविताशया॥ ८-७२

pramadāmanu saṁsthitāḥ śucā nṛpatiḥ sannapi vācyadarśanāt|
na cakāra śarīramagnisātsaha devyā na tu jīvitāśayā || 8-72

8-72. Aja did not join Indumati on the funeral pyre to burn himself and accompany his beloved to the other world because he did not want a scandal to erupt after him with people saying, 'King Aja was so enamoured of and infatuated with his wife that though he professed the virtues of equanimity, dispassion and detachment to others, he himself was just the opposite'. This would cause an irreparable damage to his otherwise immaculate reputation, and bring a blot to his entire family. This situation he did not wish to create.

So therefore, with this consideration in mind, Aja decided not to die but continue living in this world, not because he loved life and wished to enjoy it any longer, but because there was no other alternative.

[Note--Besides this consideration, there was the need to take care of his son Dasrath who at that time was still dependent on his parents. This son was a reminder of Indumati's love for him, and it would pain her to see that Aja left the fruit of their mutual love for each other uncared for and orphaned prematurely. Hence, Aja decided that he would live for the sake of their son Dasrath till the time he grew up, stood on his own two feet, and become able to take care of himself, their family name, as well as the duties of the kingdom.]

Verse no. 73:

**अथ तेन दशाहतः परे गुणशेषामपदिश्य भामिनीम्
विदुषा विधयो महर्द्धयः पुर एवोपवने समापिताः॥ ८-७३**

atha tena daśāhataḥ pare guṇaśeṣāmapadiśya bhāminīm|
viduṣā vidhayo maharddhayaḥ pura evopavane samāpitāḥ || 8-73

8-73. Thereafter, the learned and sagacious king Aja, who was well-versed in religious matters, elaborately performed all the other rituals that were to be performed after ten days of her cremation in the royal garden where she had breathed her last in the memory of Indumati who was survived by her sweet memories and excellent virtues.

[Note--The after-death rituals that are performed after ten days of cremation are done at the place where the person had died. Usually this is done at the place of residence of the deceased, but since Indumati loved this garden very much and the couple would spend much of their time there, Aja decided to perform her remaining rituals in the garden itself in her memory. Though Indumati was no longer present physically, yet she lived on in the memory of everyone by the virtue of her amiable nature and good character.]

Verse no. 74:

**स विवेश पुरीम् तया विना क्षणदापायशशाङ्कदर्शनः
परिवाहमिवावलोकयन्स्वशुचः पौरवधूमुखाश्रुषु॥ ८-७४**

sa viveśa purīm tayā vinā kṣaṇadāpāyaśaśāṅkadarśanaḥ|
parivāhamivāvalokayansvaśucaḥ pauravadhūmukhāśruṣu || 8-74

8-74. Without Indumati, king Aja looked like that moon which had lost its shine at the end of the night (i.e. in the early morning sky). When he entered the capital city from the royal garden after completion of the rituals for Indumati, the women folk felt so sorry for

him that tears trickled down from their eyes in sympathy for their king. As for Aja, he saw his own sorrows being reflected in these tears, although he himself maintained a calm and stoic composure as a noble king is expected to do in front of his subjects, no matter how much anguished, tormented, dejected and sorrowful he might be feeling internally.

Verse no. 75:

अथ तम् सवनाय दीक्षितः प्रणिधानाद्गुरुराश्रमस्थितः।
अभिषङ्गजडम् विजज्ञिवानिति शिष्येण किलान्वबोधयत्॥ ८-७५

atha tam savanāya dīkṣitaḥ praṇidhānādgururāśramasthitaḥ।
abhiṣaṅgajaḍam vijajñivāniti śiṣyeṇa kilānvabodhayat || 8-75

8-75. At that time, the royal priest sage Vashistha was engaged in doing a fire sacrifice, and that is why he could not come personally to meet Aja either at the garden where he was grieving for his dead wife Indumati, nor at the time when he came back to the city after completion of the rituals done after death.

Sage Vashistha learned about the cause of grief of king Aja by the virtue of his great spiritual powers vested in him by doing profound meditation. So he called one of his trusted disciples and sent him as his messenger to king Aja.

Verse no. 76:

असमाप्तविधिर्यतो मुनिस्तव विद्वानपि तापकारणम्।
न भवन्तमुपस्थितः स्वयम् प्रकृतौ स्थापयितुम् पथश्च्युतम्॥ ८-७६

asamāptavidhīryato munistava vidvānapi tāpakāraṇam।
na bhavantamupasthitaḥ svayam prakṛtau sthāpayitum pathaścyutam || 8-76

8-76. The disciple came to Aja and said: "Oh King! Sage Vashistha has yet not completed his fire sacrifice. This is why he neither could come to meet you personally, nor could he give you comfort at a personal level. Instead, he has sent me with his message which I would convey to you now.

Verse no. 77:

मयि तस्य सुवृत्त वर्तते लघुसंदेशपदा सरस्वती।
श्रुणु विश्रुतसत्त्वसार ताम् हृदि चैनामपधातुमर्हसि॥ ८-७७

mayi tasya suvṛtta vartate laghusaṁdeśapadā sarasvatī।
śruṇu viśrutasattvasāra tām hr̥di caināmapadhātumarhasi || 8-77

8-77. The disciple said: "Oh great king with an excellent character, one who is famous and valiant! Please listen carefully to the message which sage Vashistha has sent to you through me, and embrace it in your heart (i.e. pay attention to the message and understand its finer meaning, which would give comfort to your heart and soothe your tormented mind).

Verse no. 78:

पुरुषस्य पदेष्वजन्मनः समतीतम् च भवच्च भावि च
स हि निष्प्रतिघेन चक्षुषा त्रितयम् ज्ञानमयेन पश्यति॥ ८-७८

puruṣasya padeṣvajanmanah samatītam ca bhavacca bhāvi ca|
sa hi niṣpratighena cakṣuṣā tritayam jñānamayena paśyati || 8-78

8-78. By the virtue of his spiritual insight obtained by engagement in deep meditation and contemplation, sage Vashistha has gained the ability to perceive everything in the three divisions of this world that had been measured by the three steps of Lord Vaaman¹, a dwarf mendicant manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Lord praised in the Purans (ancient scriptures) as being eternal and unborn-- i.e. everything in the heaven, on the earth, and in the nether world.

So therefore, you must believe him and have trust in his words. Hence, please listen to his message attentively.

[Note--¹The story of Lord Vaaman in brief is as follows: This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

When the great King Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrsingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a 'Vaaman' or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth and the nether world with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali's own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali.

To wit, when Bali found that he was cornered as he could not fulfil the word given to a Brahmin, because the land for the third step was not available, he offered himself to be tied and enslaved by Lord Vaaman as a punishment for unfulfilled vow. So Lord Vaaman gracefully put his third step on Bali's head, which though appeared to be a punishment but was actually a blessing in disguise.

From then onwards, Lord Vishnu is also called ‘Trivikram’—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps.

However, the Lord was very pleased with Bali’s principles of keeping one’s words even at the cost of allowing himself to be a slave of the Lord. So even though Lord Vaaman put his leg on Bali’s head, thereby pushing him into the nether world, yet the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice that was done to Bali, a magnanimous and righteous King who had stood firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitment inspite of losing his crown and self-respect.

So therefore, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gate-keeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.

An episode is narrated in Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ where Jamvant, the old bear chief, refers to this incarnation of Lord Vaaman and says that at that time he (Jamvant) was young and in his youthful days, and that he had performed seven rounds (clockwise circumambulations) of the colossus form of Lord Vaaman to pay his homage to the latter. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 101; (b) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 79:

**चरतः किल दुश्चरम् तपस्तृणबिन्दोः परिशङ्कितः पुरा।
प्रजिघाय समाधिभेदिनीम् हरिरस्मै हरिणीम् सुराङ्गनाम्॥ ८-७९**

carataḥ kila duścaram tapastrṇabindoḥ pariśaṅkitaḥ purā|
prajighāya samādhibhedinīm harirasmai hariṇīm surāṅganām || 8-79

8-79. It is said that in the days of yore, Indra, the king of heaven, grew apprehensive¹ of the rigorous penance practised by sage Trinabindu². In order to disrupt the sage's penance, Indra sent a voluptuous celestial damsel (an Apsara) named Harini who was capable of interrupting any sage's austerities and successfully interfere with his contemplation.

[Note—¹Indra has been depicted in ancient texts as a very selfish king of gods. He is always envious of others and feels jealous that someone would snatch his heavenly crown, and its accompanying privileges. So therefore, whenever he would find that some great sage was doing penance, he feared that if the penance is successful then the sage would get powers by which he could dethrone Indra and snatch his authority. In Trinbindu's case, Indra sent a celestial damsel of his court, called ‘Apsara’, named Harini to break his austerities and defile his purity.

²Sage Trinbindu: This ancient sage had done great penance at a place called ‘Rishitirtha’ (refer: Padma Puran, chapter 20). Once while he was doing penance, many celestial damsels came and started dancing, singing and generally frolicking around the hermitage. Annoyed at this behaviour, sage Trinbindu cursed those damsels by saying that any woman who comes to his hermitage uninvited would become pregnant, which in turn would give that lady a bad reputation. It so happened that once his own daughter Manini, unaware of this curse, visited her father when he was doing penance. The curse had its automatic effect, and Manini became pregnant. To save her reputation because she was innocent, Trinbindu approached another sage named Pulastya and requested him to marry her. He also blessed his daughter that her son would inherit all the good characters of a sage. Her son was Vishrava.

By a twist of fate, Vishrava had a son who would become the notorious demon king Ravana who had unleashed a reign of terror in this world, and had also abducted Lord Ram’s wife Sita.

There is a story linking Trinbindu with Lord Hanuman, the beloved devotee and favourite messenger of Lord Ram who had searched out Sita in Lanka. In his younger days, Hanuman used to be very mischievous and naughty like any other restless child. Once he tried to tease sage Trinbindu by tying a lion and an elephant to posts outside the sage’s hermitage. The sage felt annoyed and decided to teach Hanuman a lesson in order to tame him and make him sober in his ways. So, the sage cursed Hanuman that he would henceforth forget his strength and powers. When Hanuman asked for forgiveness, the sage blessed him and laid a condition that when he grew up to become an adult, he would regain all his stupendous powers and strength at a time when his services would be needed by Lord Ram. The story of the Ramayana tells us that when the monkeys and bears were sent by Lord Ram in search of Sita, they sat contemplating how to cross the mighty ocean in order to reach Lanka where she was held captive by Ravana. No one in the group could muster courage to go and come back alive. At this point, Jamvant, the bear chief, reminded Hanuman of his past glory and told him that it was for the service of Lord Ram, who was a human manifestation of the Supreme Being, that he had taken birth on earth. It was a ripe time for sage Trinbindu’s curse to end. Hence, Hanuman overcame his curse, and at once got back his lost strength and powers. Once his glory and abilities were restored, it was easy for him to not only cross the ocean and find Sita, but burn Lanka to punish Ravana, and later on play a crucial role in the war that followed, leading to the elimination of the evil demons and victory for Lord Ram.]

Verse no. 80:

स तपःप्रतिबन्धमन्युना प्रमुखाविष्कृतचारुविभ्रमम्
अशपद्भव मानुषीति ताम् शमवेलाप्रलयोर्मिणा भुवि॥ ८-८०

sa tapaḥpratibandhamanyunā pramukhāviṣkṛtacāruvibhramam|
aśapadbhava mānuṣīti tām śamavelāpralayormiṇā bhuvi || 8-80

8-80. Just like the case of the doomsday storm that forces the ocean to rise high and breach the limits of its shores and surge inland to unleash havoc on land, so was similar

the case with the Apsara named Harini who employed all tricks she knew to arouse sage Trinbindu and disrupt his penance. When the sage discovered the reason of the disturbance, he became furious and cursed the damsel that she be demoted to the mortal world and become an ordinary woman with limited powers like ordinary human beings as opposed to her present status of being a heavenly damsel with virtually unlimited powers to do whatever she wanted to do.

Verse no. 81:

**भगवन्परवानयम् जनः प्रतिकूलाचरितम् क्षमस्व मे।
इति चोपनताम् क्षितिस्पृशम् कृतवाना सुरपुष्पदर्शनात्॥ ८-८१**

bhagavanparavānayam janah pratikūlācaritam kṣamasva me|
iti copanatām kṣitisprśam kṛtavānā surapuṣpadarśanāt || 8-81

8-81. As soon as the Apsara heard the sage's curse, she was shocked and terrified. She joined her palms in supplication and pleaded with the sage, saying, 'Oh lord (bhagavan)! I have done what I did on the orders of Indra; I am not at fault as I had not disturbed you willingly, but unfortunately I had to obey his command (as he is the king of heaven and I work under him). Therefore, oh sage, please forgive me for the wrong I have done; I seek mercy from you.'

The sage took cognizance of her prayer, and remitted the curse to some extent. He told the Apsara: 'You will have to become a mortal human being because my curse can't go in vain. But I bless you that it would be limited to the time when one day you see heavenly flowers fall upon you, then you will immediately be freed from this curse of being a mortal woman, and revert to your primary status of a heavenly Apsara and go back to heaven.'

Verse no. 82:

**ऋथकैशिकवंशसंभवा तव भूत्वा महिषी चिराय सा।
उपलब्धवती दिवश्च्युतम् विवशा शापनिवृत्तिकारणम्॥ ८-८२**

krathakaiśikavaṁśasaṁbhavā tava bhūtvā mahiṣī cirāya sā|
upalabdhavatī divaśchyutam vivaśā śāpanivṛttikāraṇam || 8-82

8-82. It is the same Apsara who took birth in the family of the king of Vidharva as Indumati, and then in due course of time she became your queen. Now when the designated time for her curse to come to an end arrived, the garland fell from the heaven, which in turn freed her from her curse and enabled her to go back to her native habitat in the heaven.

{So, therefore, there is nothing to feel so sorrowful about. Every creature is bound by certain consequences of its past deeds, and there is no way out of it. All relations in this world are linked to the results of one's past deeds, and how these results make the

individual creatures cross each other's paths. There is no permanency in any worldly relationships; everything is transient as the world itself. Just like the wind that comes and goes at will without bothering whether one likes it or not, so is the case with each soul that charts its own path during its journey in this mortal world. Of course, during this journey one's path may cross someone else's path for some predetermined time, but it is just that--there is no permanency to such relationships. Hence, you must not feel sad or distraught at the death of Indumati. She was travelling her own path, and it was just a matter of coincidence that her path crossed your path for some time, after which she headed to her destination, just like you too are headed to your own destination. You have always professed dispassion, detachment and equanimity--well now, practice it yourself, oh great and noble king!}

Verse no. 83:

**तदलम् तदपायचिन्तया विपदुत्पत्तिमतामुपस्थिता।
वसुधेयमवेक्ष्यताम् त्वया वसुमत्या हि नृपाः कलत्रिणः॥ ८-८३**

tadalam tadapāyacintayā vipadutpattimatāmupasthitā।
vasudheyamavekṣyatām tvayā vasumatyā hi nrpāḥ kalatrinah || 8-83

8-83. There is no reason why you should grieve for her (Indumati) because anyone who takes a birth in this mortal world must die one day or the other; this is a sacrosanct, an inviolable, and an unchangeable truth of creation. So therefore, you must discard all kinds of grief and feeling of sadness, and on the contrary you should diligently take care of your duties and responsibilities towards the kingdom, because for a wise and intelligent king the earth over which he rules is his true de-facto companion towards which he owes his glory, majesty and honour.

[Note--According to ancient tradition, the king is the 'lord' of the earth over which he rules, just like the case of his being the 'lord' for his queen in all official matters. He owes a moral obligation to take care of them both, but more so towards the earth, i.e. the realm of the kingdom over which he rules as it includes the welfare and well-being of countless subjects of the kingdom, all of whom look to their king for all kinds of support and help. While taking good care of the kingdom and its people, the king serves hundreds and thousands of people, as opposed to serving only one woman who is his queen. So, the merit of serving the earth and its inhabitants that live under him and depend on him is obviously manifold times more than the merit of serving a single woman called his wife.

Hence, sage Vashistha exhorts Aja to serve the wider interest of his subjects by controlling his emotions and getting to work in right earnest. After all, Indumati will never come back, and that which is gone forever must be best forgotten. What is present and future must be taken care of, instead of lamenting and grieving for the past that is gone and is no more.]

Verse no. 84:

उदये मदवाच्यमुज्झता श्रुतमाविष्कृतमात्मवत्त्वया|
मनसस्तदुपस्थिते ज्वरे पुनरक्लीबतया प्रकाशयताम्॥ ८-८४

udaye madavācyamujjhatā śrutamāviṣkṛtamātmavattvayā|
manasastadupasthite jvare punaraklībatayā prakāśyatām || 8-84

8-84. Usually kings become arrogant, haughty and egoist when they get fame and powers, but you had shown no such negative trait out of your wisdom and sagacity. You had always been meritorious, modest and kind, and you had always focused on spiritual knowledge and enhancement. So now, please remember your meritorious status and calm down. Act with wisdom and erudition by overcoming grief, and practice resilience and fortitude during these testing times in your life. {This is the time of your litmus test, and prove yourself worthy of your wisdom, good name and reputation. Overcome transient sorrows, and become stable in mind.}

Verse no. 85:

रुदता कुत एव सा पुनर्भवता नानुमृतापि लभ्यते|
परलोकजुषाम् स्वकर्मभिर्गतयो भिन्नपथा हि देहिनाम्॥ ८-८५

rudatā kuta eva sā punarbhavatā nānumṛtāpi labhyate|
paralokajuṣām svakarmabhirgatayo bhinnapathā hi dehinām || 8-85

8-85. Say, what is the use of wailing and weeping for Indumati? Even if you die crying for her, she is not going to come back to you, for each individual goes on a path depending upon the result of the deeds done by that person while alive, and the paths of any two individuals are therefore different from one another. So Indumati has gone on her own path, and if you die you will go on your own path, which may end somewhere else than where Indumati has gone. So be wise and realise the truth of this matter, as lamenting and grieving over things beyond one's control is nothing but foolishness.

Verse no. 86:

अपशोकमनाः कुटुम्बिनीमनुगृहणीष्व निवापदत्तिभिः|
स्वजनाश्रु किलातिसंततम् दहति प्रेतमिति प्रचक्षते॥ ८-८६

apaśokamanāḥ kuṭumbinīmanugṛhṇīṣva nivāpadattibhiḥ|
svajanāśru kilātisaṁtatam dahati pretamiti pracakṣate || 8-86

8-86. Oh king! Now abandon wailing and lamenting for Indumati, and having done her last rites you must now compose yourself and calm down, because weeping and lamenting over a dead person by kinsmen torments the deceased person's soul and it does not find rest.

{By grieving, crying and lamenting for Indumati, you are doing a disservice to her soul. It would be advisable and wise for you to give her rest by becoming calm and going about your duties while silently remembering her in your heart. She would feel so nice to see you happy, instead of seeing you distraught and sad. So for her sake at least, you must regain your former composed nature, and go about the affairs of life in a normal way.}

Verse no. 87:

**मरणम् प्रकृतिः शरीरिणाम् विकृतिर्जीवितमुच्यते बुधैः।
क्षणमप्यवतिष्ठते श्वसन्यदि जन्तुर्ननु लाभवानसौ॥ ८-८७**

marāṇam prakṛtiḥ śarīriṇām vikṛtijīvitamucyate budhaiḥ|
kṣaṇamapyavatiṣṭhate śvasanyadi janturnanu lābhavānasau || 8-87

8-87. For all living beings in this mortal world, death is natural and unavoidable, while life is uncertain and incidental. Therefore, one ought to be contented and happy with whatever period one lives, as every passing moment is a gift granted by the Supreme Lord, and each such moment leads one so much the closer to that moment which will certainly come, i.e. the moment of death, which also the Lord had destined.

[Note--This is why ancient philosophy says that a person should live one day at a time, and thank God each night before sleeping that the Lord has been graceful to grant the person one whole day of life. With this philosophy, one would never think of harming others because of selfish ends, because he understands that there is no certainty if he would live the next moment to see his aims fulfilled, so why should he make others suffer for things he is himself uncertain about.]

Verse no. 88:

**अवगच्छति मूढचेतनः प्रियनाशम् हृदि शल्यमर्पितम्।
स्थिरधीस्तु तदेव मन्यते कुशलद्वारतया समुद्धृतम्॥ ८-८८**

avagacchati mūḍhacetanaḥ priyanāśam hṛdi śalyamarpitam|
sthiradhīstu tadeva manyate kuśaladvāratayā samuddhṛtam || 8-88

8-88. Those who are deluded and lack wisdom think that separation from one's beloved is like a thorn or nail in one's heart which gives one continuous sorrows, while those who are realistic and possess spiritual wisdom, sagacity and erudition understand that such separation was destined to happen sooner or later, and that it has actually opened the door for liberation from worldly bondage, because the soul of the departed person has found its own path, and has thereby freed that person from all obligations and commitments to the former, paving the way of independence for that person.

[Note--When 'A' dies, his close companion 'B' now becomes free from all obligations and commitments to 'A'. 'B' gets freedom and independence. To lament for 'A' neither serves any purpose, nor does it free the other person 'B' from the worldly bondage that he had established with 'A' under false impression and delusions of permanence in this basically impermanent world.]

Verse no. 89:

स्वशरीरशरीरिणावपि श्रुतसंयोगविपर्ययौ यदा
विरहः किमिवानुतापयेद्वद बाह्यैर्विषयैर्विपश्चितम्॥ ८-८९

svaśarīraśarīriṇāvapi śrutasaṁyogaviparyayau yadā
virahaḥ kimivānutāpayedvada bāhyairviṣayairvipaścitam || 8-89

8-89. Tell me yourself oh wise king, when one's own Atma (soul) departs from one's own body without a blink (at the time when a person dies), and shows no regret or remorse while doing so, but rather the sublime soul feels liberated from the fetter of a gross body, then what regret or remorse would a son, a wife, a father, or for that matter any other individual who is artificially related to another in this mortal world, have when separated from one another?

Therefore, wise and learned people should not feel sad and sorrowful due to separation from others.

[Note--A person's own soul, which is one's 'true self' and which is otherwise indistinguishable from one's body, shows no regret when leaving that body which had been the soul's visible identity in this world, then what sense is there in regretting at the separation of two independent persons who are primarily separate and distinguished from one another even in physical terms!]

Verse no. 90:

न पृथग्जनवच्छुचो वशम् वशिनामुत्तम गन्तुमर्हसि
द्रुमसानुमताम् किमन्तरम् यदि वायौ द्वितयेऽपि ते चलाः॥ ८-९०

na prthagjanavacchuco vaśam vaśināmuttama gantumarhasi
drumasānumatām kimantaram yadi vāyau dvitaye'pi te calāḥ || 8-90

8-90. Oh king Aja who is most eminent amongst those who practice self-restraint over their senses (vaśam vaśināmuttama)! It is inappropriate for you to be so moved at the separation of Indumati, for say what difference would be there between a mountain and the leaves of a tree if both are swayed by the gust of breeze?

Hence, you should remain calm and stable in the face of sorrowful conditions like the unmoving mountain that the wind cannot sway. {Herein lies your glory, and you will be remembered and honoured for all times to come for this great virtue of yours. Being

swayed by adversity is a lowly character, while being firm and steady is a honourable trait.}

[Note--In this analogy, Aja is likened to a mountain because he is stable in mind and remains poised even during adverse circumstances, while other ordinary people are compared to leaves because they are easily moved by changing circumstances.]

Verse no. 91:

स तथेति विनेतुरुदारमतेः प्रतिगृह्य वचो विससर्ज मुनिम्
तदलब्धपदम् हृदि शोकघने प्रतियातमिवान्तिकमस्य गुरोः॥ ८-९१

sa tatheti vineturudāramateḥ pratigṛhya vaco visasarja munim |
tadalabdhapadam hr̥di śokaghane pratiyātamivāntikamasya guroḥ || 8-91

8-91. King Aja, who was already distressed and overwhelmed with grief and sorrow at the death of his beloved wife Indumati, quietly listened to the message sent by his learned and wise advisor and royal priest sage Vashistha in a nonchalant manner, and then bid goodbye to the messenger and sent him back.

But for all practical purposes, Aja found no interest in sage Vashistha's message because his heart and mind were too full of the thoughts of his late wife so much so that there was no space left in them to give a place to any other thought. In brief, sage Vashistha's sagely advise had no effect on the distraught king.

Verse no. 92:

तेनाष्टौ परिगमिताः समाः कथंचिद्बालत्वादवितथसूनृतेन सूनोः।
सादृश्यप्रतिकृतिदर्शनैः प्रियायाः स्वप्नेषु क्षणिकसमागमोत्सवैश्च॥ ८-९२

tenāṣṭau parigamitāḥ samāḥ kathamcidbālatvādavitathasūnṛtena sūnoḥ |
sādr̥śyapratikṛtidarśanaiḥ priyāyāḥ svapneṣu kṣaṇikasamāgamotsavaiśca ||
8-92

8-92. The truthful king Aja somehow spent the next eight years for the sake of his still-young son Dasrath till he grew up to become an adult. During these years, he would spend time in the memory of his beloved Indumati by seeing her pictures when awake, or by dreaming of being with her when he slept.

Verse no. 93:

तस्य प्रसह्य हृदयम् किल शोकशङ्कुः प्लक्षप्ररोह इव सौधतलम् बिभेद।
प्राणान्तहेतुमपि तम् भिषजामसाध्यं लाभम् प्रियानुगमने त्वरया स मेने॥ ८-९३

tasya prasahya hr̥dayam kila śokaśaṅkuḥ plakṣapraroha iva saudhatalam
bibheda|
prāṇāntahetumapi tam bhiṣajāmasādhyaṁ lābham priyānugamane tvarayā sa
mene || 8-93

8-93. Just like the sprouts of a fig tree, if allowed to find a footing on rooftops of houses, would grow so wildly that its roots would crack the roofs of those houses, no matter how big or strongly built they are, the sharp arrow of grief at the loss of Indumati had similarly punctured the otherwise tough, resilient and dispassionate heart of king Aja so much so that he became sick. He would spend his days quietly as if lost in deep thoughts, unconcerned about the affairs of the outside world, and generally as if some serious malaise had been gnawing into his innards, reducing him to a diseased and wretched man.

His emotional breakdown was not curable by medicine men, and it veered towards a life-threatening disease. King Aja took this disease not as a curse but as a blessing, because he believed it would clear the path for him to finally reunite with his beloved late wife Indumati. {Aja welcomed death as it would reunite him with Indumati in the other world.}

Verse no. 94:

सम्यग्विनीतमथ वर्महरम् कुमारमादिश्य रक्षणविधौ विधिवत्प्रजानाम्
रोगोपसृष्टतनुदुर्वसतिम् मुमुक्षुः प्रायोपवेशनमतिर्नृपतिर्बभूव॥ ८-९४

samyagvinītamatha varmaharam kumāramādiśya rakṣaṇavidhau
vidhivatprajānām|
rogopasr̥ṣṭatanudurvasatim mumukṣuḥ prāyopaveśanamatirnr̥patirbabhūva || 8-
94

8-94. After sometime when his son Dasrath, who was by nature polite, intelligent and well-groomed, came of age, his father king Aja prepared him to take up the responsibility of the kingdom. He entrusted Dasrath with all the duties related to the day-to-day affairs of the kingdom, and taught him all the intricacies of royal responsibilities, the laws and rules of statecraft, of diplomacy, of political and military science, and the wisdom and the strategies needed to run a vast kingdom like Ayodhya.

Meanwhile, Aja himself began fasting to hasten his death and free him from the sufferings that he had to endure because of his diseased body.

Verse no. 95:

तीर्थे तोयव्यतिकरभवे जहनुकन्यासरय्वो-
र्देहत्यागादमरगणनालेख्यमासाद्य सद्यः|
पूर्वाकाराधिकतररुचा संगतः कान्तयासौ
लीलागारेष्वरमत पुनर्नन्दनाभ्यन्तरेषु॥ ८-९५

tīrthe toyavyatikarabhave jahnukanyāsarayvo-
rdehatyāgādamaragaṇanālekhyamāsādya sadyaḥ|
pūrvākārādhikatararucā saṁgataḥ kāntayāsau
līlāgāreṣvaramata punarnandanābhyyantareṣu || 8-95

8-95. By-and-by, king Aja left his mortal body at the confluence of rivers Ganges and Saryu, and immediately assumed a heavenly body that was god-like. He then got reunited with his wife Indumati, who herself had acquired a heavenly form more beautiful than what she had as a human being, and went to live with her in the wonderful pleasure houses of the heavenly garden called Nandan Vana, which themselves were finer and more beautiful than the royal garden and its pleasure houses in Ayodhya where they had been separated from each other at the time of Indumati's death.

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये अष्टमः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye aṣṭamaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 8th canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 9, verse nos. 1-82:

Introduction:

After the death of his illustrious late father king Aja, Dasrath (also spelled as Dashrath or Dasrath) ascended the throne of Ayodhya and carried forward the great legacy of his father as well as his other ancestors in a wise, graceful and dignified manner.

King Dasrath had all the excellent characters and virtues needed for a king to become glorified and gain renown and respect in the world, both by his subjects as well as by his adversaries alike. He was elegant and graceful; while on the one hand he was magnanimous, charitable, tolerant and compassionate, and on the other hand he was firm, resolute, uncompromising and determined in pursuit of his goals.

He treated all with equanimity, never letting himself be overcome by bias. He judged everyone by the merit of the individual's deeds, and not by his birth, status, religion, caste or creed, meting out punishment and giving rewards in a dispassionate, neutral and judicious manner, a trait that endeared him to his subjects as well as to his adversaries who expected fair deal from him under all situations. Whenever giving punishment to an offender, king Dasrath's emphasis was on reform, rehabilitation and correction, rather than blindly inflicting suffering, and even while punishing the offender he always kept in mind the seriousness of the crime, the situation that forced the person to commit the crime, and the latter's ability to cope with the intensity of the punishment. He was neither too harsh, nor too lenient.

He always followed the principles of Dharma in all spheres of life, i.e. right conduct, right thought, right speech, right attitude, right approach, and right knowledge.

His majesty, authority, power and influence extended as far as the land was between the two shores of the ocean, the east and the west. He was fearless, powerful and strong enough to ride his chariot alone and go anywhere he wanted to go, without being apprehensive of being attacked or ambushed.

He was as expansive, deep, majestic, formidable and awe-inspiring as the mighty ocean, and when he visited the ocean, it roared and heaved to applaud and welcome its monarch, king Dasrath.

He employed the many tools of statecraft, diplomacy and military might to keep all his enemies and junior kings under control. His name was enough to rein-in all wayward elements in his vast realm, as he would not like to impose himself on anyone personally if his name could achieve the same result with dignity.

It is said that during his time, there were only two 'kings' in this world--one was Indra, the king of heaven, and the other was Dasrath, the king of earth.

He had fought alongside Indra against the demons, and had performed many huge fire sacrifices.

King Dasrath had such a fine character and owned such excellent qualities that when Lord Vishnu decided to come down to earth as a human being in the form of Lord Ram, he chose Dasrath to become his worldly father.

But as every good thing must come to an end one or the other day, a certain inadvertent mistake made by this otherwise righteous king Dasrath finally led to his decline and death in the later days of his life. The incident briefly is as follows:

One day while he was out hunting and pursuing wild animals in the forest, he heard a loud gurgling sound in water of a distant pond. He thought it was a male elephant drinking water, while actually the sound was produced when a young sage was filling an empty clay pot with water to take it to his blind parents who were thirsty and waited at a distance. Dasrath shot an arrow in that direction in the belief that it was a game, but the arrow hit the young sage named Shravan Kumar who was filling water in the pot for his blind and elderly parents; he yelled in grief and lay half dead as the arrow stuck in his chest. When Dasrath rushed there he discovered to his utter dismay the horrific mistake he had made inadvertently. But it was too late. The young sage asked Dasrath to take him to his old blind parents so that they can quench their thirst. There, the king regretted and told the old couple the truth of how he had committed a serious mistake of shooting their son out of ignorance. But as destined by the fiat of fate, the aged couple asked him to arrange for a funeral pyre where all the three--i.e. the two parents and their son--burned themselves to go to heaven. But at the time of departure, the old parents cursed Dasrath

that like the case of their dying in grief of separation from their beloved son, so one day Dasrath too would die of grief at the separation of his son.

This prophesy proved to be a blessing in disguise for king Dasrath because till that time he had no son. To be effective, the curse obviously entailed that the king must have a son, albeit this blessing would pave the way for his ultimate grief later on in life when he would die with grief at the forced separation from his most beloved son. So therefore, the blessing gave the opportunity to the king to have four wonderful sons, Lord Ram and his three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. But since the elderly sage's curse could not go in vain, Dasrath had to die grieving and lamenting at the forced separation from Lord Ram, his most dear son. While dying, the king recalled this incident and shared it with his trusted minister, as is clearly narrated in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

With this brief background, let us now proceed with the reading of the main text of Canto 9 of Raghuvansham as follows:

Verse no. 1:

पितुरनन्तरमुत्तरकोसलान्समधिगम्य समाधिजितेन्द्रियः।

दशरथः प्रशशास महारथो यमवतामवताम् च धुरि स्थितः॥ ९-१

pituranantaramuttarakosalānsamadhigamya samādhijitendriyaḥ |
daśarathaḥ praśāśāsa mahāratho yamavatānavatām ca dhuri sthitaḥ || 9-1

9-1. King Dasrath (also spelled as Dashrath or Dasrath) had reined-in and exercised exemplary self-control over his sense organs so much so that he acquired eminence in the community of wise kings who were known for good care of their respective subjects and kingdoms. He was a mighty monarch and warrior, and he took charge of his kingdom of north Kaushal after his illustrious father Aja's death.

[Note--The kingdom of north Kaushal had its capital at Ayodhya. Hence, it was also called the kingdom of Ayodhya. It was one of the sixteen powerful 'Mahajanpads', or large kingdoms or realms of North India. Geographically, it corresponded to the modern-day Avadha region in central and eastern state of Uttar Pradesh. It was a powerful kingdom with its boundaries as follows--in the north was the foothills of Himalayan mountain range; in the south was the river Ganges; in the east was the Gandak or Narayani river, which was known as Sadanira river in ancient times; and in the west was the Gomti river which separated it from the Panchal kingdom. It encompassed the territories of the Shakyans, Mallakas, Koliyas, Kaalaamas and Moriyas.

This kingdom was distinct from South Kaushal which was located in the present day state of Chattisgarh and western part of Odissa.]

Verse no. 2:

अधिगतम् विधिवद्यदपालयत्प्रकृतिमण्डलमात्मकुलोचितम्।
अभवदस्य ततो गुणवत्तरम् सनगरम् नगरन्धकरौजसः॥ ९-२

adhigatam vidhivadyadapālayatprakṛtimaṇḍalamātmakulocitam |
abhavadasya tato guṇavattaram sanagaram nagarandhrakaraujaṣaḥ || 9-2

9-2. King Dasrath was as valiant as Kartikeya (son of Lord Shiva and a warrior god; commander of heavenly forces of the gods) who had once successfully pierced a mountain¹. King Dasrath took good care of the subjects of the kingdom which he had inherited from his forefathers so much so that the people gradually began to treat him with great respect, considering him to be better than his predecessors, and thus showed great honour to him.

[Note--¹The brief story of Kartikeya piercing a mountain is this: A demon named Banasura, son of Mahabali, fled from the battle in which his ally Tarakasura was killed by Kartikeya, and he hid inside a mountain named Krauncha. Some accounts call this demon Krauncha after whom this mountain was named.

A question arose who amongst the gods could pierce the mountain to slay the hiding demon. Indra's vajra could only slice the tip and sides of this rocky mountain, but it could not drill through it to reach the demon. Then Kartikeya shot his own weapon called Vel or Shakti (a fiery spear) which drilled through the mountain, split it into two, reached the demon hiding inside it, and slayed it.

It is believed that Kartikeya's weapon Shakti was given to him by the Fire-God.

There is yet another version of this story, according to which once a demon named Krauncha had offended sage Agastya who cursed him to become a mountain. When the demon asked for forgiveness, the sage said that one day when Lord Shiva's son Kartikeya would shoot his weapon at the mountain, the demon would be freed from the curse and his soul would find deliverance.]

Verse no. 3:

उभयमेव वदन्ति मनीषिणः समयवर्षितया कृतकर्मणाम्।
बलनिषुदनमर्थपतिम् च तम् श्रमनुदम् मनुदण्डधरान्वयम्॥ ९-३

ubhayameva vadanti maṇiṣiṇaḥ samayavarṣitayā kṛtakarmaṇām |
balaṇiṣudanamarthapatim ca tam śramanudam manudaṇḍadharānvayam ||
9-3

9-3. Wise people say that in this world there have been only two persons who could correctly judge others on the basis of the merit of their deeds. They would understand the value of the efforts made by all those who performed their duties diligently, honestly and faithfully, and thereby they gave such people rewards accordingly. One such great judge was Indra, the king of heaven, and the other was Dasrath, the king of earth.

While on the one hand Indra rewarded the farmers by giving timely rain so that their labour in the fields could bear fruit, and on the other hand king Dasrath, the descendent of the illustrious family of Manu, rewarded good deeds by giving ample wealth to the doer of such noble deeds (i.e. Dasrath rewarded farmers and tillers of the land by providing them all possible help so that they could reap a good harvest and never suffer from wants; he would pay the farmers and tillers of the land handsomely; he would also reward traders and other professionals who paid their state taxes in time by forgiving them in case they suffer losses, or by giving them discounts or largesse to keep them in good cheer).

[Note--Dasrath did not force farmers to give anything forcibly. The farmers gave their taxes willingly because they knew that whatever they gave to the king was to be used for general good. Similarly, traders and other professions too gave their taxes voluntarily to the state because they knew it would be used for general good of the kingdom.

Further, king Dasrath used to spend on charities and other welfare schemes, and therefore the taxpayer was glad that his money was being used for noble purposes, which in turn made them comply voluntarily.]

Verse no. 4:

जनपदे न गदः पदमादधावभिभवः कुत एव सपत्नजः।

क्षितिरभुत्फलवत्यजनन्दने शमरतेऽमरतेजसि पार्थिवे॥ ९-४

janapade na gadaḥ padamādhāvabhibhavaḥ kuta eva sapatnajah |
kṣītirabhutphalavatyaajanandane śamarate'maratejasi pārthive || 9-4

9-4. Known for his peaceful nature and calm demeanours, king Dasrath, the son of Aja, was as glorious and influential as the gods of heaven. His kingdom became prosperous and wealthy; there was no disease or other kind of calamity that could cause suffering to his subjects anywhere. Even his enemies and adversaries dared not to attack his kingdom as they were well aware of his strength and powers.

[Note--Ancient wisdom says that when there is sin or A-Dharma in any ruler's realm, then sufferance in various forms, such as diseases of all sorts, famine, drought, wars, internal discord, et al prevail in the kingdom. On the other hand, if Dharma, i.e. everything that is good and noble, is the state principle, and both the king and his subjects live a life in accordance with the principles of Dharma, then peace, happiness, prosperity, well-being and all-round development become the norm.

Since king Dasrath was a strict adherent to the principles of Dharma, and ensured that his subjects too followed these principles, there was peace, prosperity and happiness throughout his kingdom. Even Dasrath's enemies respected him for his goodness and virtues, and they feared him for his powers, strength and military might. Therefore, no enemy dared to attack Dasrath and his kingdom.]

Verse no. 5:

दशदिगन्तजिता रघुणा यथा श्रियमपुष्यदजेन ततः परम्।
तमधिगम्य तथैव पुनर्बभौ न न महीनमहीनपराक्रमम्॥ ९-५

daśadigantajitā raghuṇā yathā śriyamapuṣyadajena tataḥ param |
tamadhigamya tathaiva punarbabhau na na mahīnamahīnaparākramam || 9-5

9-5. Even as earth was glad to have Raghu and Aja as its king in the past, it was again very happy and contented to have Dasrath as its ruler in the present time, for Dasrath was as worthy, honourable, powerful, virtuous, valiant and commendable a king as his ancestors in every possible way.

Verse no. 6:

समतया वसुवृष्टिविसर्जनैनियमनादसताम् च नराधिपः।
अनुययौ यमपुण्यजनेश्वरौ सवरुणावरुणाग्रसरम् रुचा॥ ९-६

samatayā vasuvṛṣṭivisarjanainiyamanādasatām ca narādhipaḥ |
anuyayau yamapuṇyajaneśvarau savaruṇāvaruṇāgrasaram rucā || 9-6

9-6. Just like the case of Yamraj (the god of death) treating everyone alike (i.e. he spares none from death, no matter how powerful or weak a person may be), Kuber (the god of wealth) giving wealth to the deserving without discrimination, Varun (the god of water) punishing sinners and evil persons dispassionately (by either causing drought or deluge), and the Sun-God giving light to one and all, no matter who they are, likewise king Dasrath treated everyone equally, with equanimity and dispassion, rewarding or punishing a person according to his deeds and merit of each individual case, giving away wealth charitably and with magnanimity, without any discrimination whatsoever.

In other words, king Dasrath governed his kingdom judiciously, wisely, and in a lawful manner, taking care of his subjects and ensuring their welfare in such a way that everyone got what he or she deserved, without any bias or personal emotions affecting his actions in the same way as Yamraj, Kuber, Varun and the Sun-God treated the creatures of this world.

Verse no. 7:

न मृगयाभिरतिर्न दुरोदरम् न च शशिप्रतिमाभरणम् मधु।
तमुदयाय न वा नवयौवना प्रियतमा यतमानमपाहरत्॥ ९-७

na mṛgayābhiratirna durodaram na ca śaśipratimābharaṇam madhu |
tamudayaā na vā navayauvanā priyatamā yatamānamapāharat || 9-7

9-7. Ever hoping to rise and acquire good name and fame, king Dasrath was very careful about his conduct and character, never even thinking of doing anything that would be

deemed unworthy of him. Hence, he showed no interest in and shunned pleasures that usually kings are accustomed to, such as hunting, gambling, drinking wine under the shadow of the moon (i.e. in the night and in the open), or enjoying the company of young women. {To wit, Dasrath practiced exemplary life of self-control over his senses and natural instincts.}

Verse no. 8:

**न कृपणा प्रभवत्यपि वासवे न वितथा परिहासकथास्वपि।
न च सपत्नजनेष्वपि तेन वागपरुषा परुषाक्षरमीरिता॥ ९-८**

na kṛpaṇā prabhavatyapi vāsave na vitathā parihāsakathāsvapi |
na ca sapatnajaneṣvapi tena vāgaparuṣā paruṣākṣaramīritā || 9-8

9-8. King Dasrath had such an excellent character that he never showed either disrespect nor unnecessary humility even before Indra, the king of heaven (even though Indra was senior to him, because Dasrath always maintained his self-respect and dignity, was not afraid of Indra or feared that Indra would punish him on some excuse), never uttered a word of lie even while cracking jokes when enjoying the company of friends during his free time, and never said any harsh words in anger even to his enemies.

To wit, king Dasrath always maintained his dignity and self-respect, was always truthful, and spoke politely with everyone.

Verse no. 9:

**उदयमस्तमयम् च रघूद्वहादुभयमानशिरे वसुधाधिपाः।
स हि निदेशमलङ्घयतामभुत्सुहृदयोहृदयः प्रतिगर्जताम्॥ ९-९**

udayamastamayam ca raghūdvaḥādubhayamānaśire vasudhādhīpāḥ |
sa hi nideśamalaṅghayatāmabhutsuḥṛdayohṛdayaḥ pratigarjatām || 9-9

9-9. Other kings of the earth either received honours from him if they showed him due respect and obeyed him, or were pulled down if they confronted him and showed disrespect to him.

King Dasrath, who was a shining star in the illustrious family of late king Raghu, would show honour, magnanimity and kindness to those kings who obeyed him and showed respect to him because he would let such kings rule their kingdoms, while those kings who opposed and confronted him were pulled down from their thrones.

To wit, for friendly kings he was a good friend, while for inimical kings he was like a person with an iron heart, unsparing and grave.

Verse no. 10:

अजयदेकरथेन स मेदिनीमुदधिनेमिमधिज्यशरासनः।

जयमघोषयदस्य तु केवलम् गजवती जवतीव्रहया चमुः॥ ९-१०

ajayadekarathena sa medinīmudadhinemimadhijyaśarāsanah |
jayamaghoṣayadasya tu kevalam gajavatī javatīvrahayā camuḥ || 9-10

9-10. King Dasrath was so brave, fearless, valiant and courageous that with a bow in hand and riding alone on a war chariot he was able to conquer the entire earth stretching from one shore of the ocean to the other shore (i.e. the land from the shore of the eastern ocean to the shore of the western ocean).

The army consisting of fast moving war horses and elephants that accompanied him during his military campaigns had little active role to play, because king Dasrath led from the front and conquered everyone single-handedly. So his troops had little to do except blow bugles of victory and raise a cheer in Dasrath's honour after every conquest.

[Note--This is why Dasrath, like his forefathers, was called a Chakravarti King, i.e. a king whose sway extends in all the directions of the land. The word 'chakra' means a circle, hence the term refers to a king whose domain extended in all the directions like the radius of a circle. In the context of the Indian sub-continent, the extensive land mass under control of Dasrath covered the entire swathe of land from the Bay of Bengal in the east, to the Arabian Ocean in the west.]

Verse no. 11:

अवनिमेकरथेन वरुथिना जितवतः किल तस्य धनुर्भृतः।

विजयदुन्दुभिताम् ययुरर्णवा घनरवा नरवाहनसम्पदः॥ ९-११

avanimekarathena varuthinā jitavataḥ kila tasya dhanurbhṛtaḥ |
vijayadundubhitām yayurarṇavā ghanaravā naravāhanasampadaḥ || 9-11

9-11. Like Kuber, the custodian of the wealth of heaven, king Dasrath, who was very wealthy, powerful, strong and valiant, established an unchallenged authority over the land. Wherever he went on any mission, his arrival was heralded by the thundering sound of his trumpets that resembled the thunder of rain-bearing clouds. Even the mighty ocean, the lord of water, heaved to salute him, and it roared as a reciprocal gesture to echo the trumpet of Dasrath to welcome the king, to express its solidarity with the great conqueror, and to honour him as its monarch.

[Note--Wealth is a mighty conqueror, and it subdues everyone; there is no exception to this rule. In this material world, there is no one who would not like to have money in some form. So therefore, a wealthy person is welcomed everywhere, especially if the person is polite, compassionate, gracious and humane. He can easily overcome even the greatest adversary if he liberally gives gifts and largesse to the latter. This is what is meant in this verse by referring to Kuber--because being the wealthiest of gods he is

welcomed and shown due respect by all. No one would like to antagonise him and lose whatever wealth he possess.

Similarly, king Dasrath was welcomed by everyone. He had wealth, he was powerful, and he was magnanimous, compassionate and polite. No king would like to make him an enemy and invite his wrath.

The ocean heaves during the full moon night; similarly it heaved whenever king Dasrath visited its shores as a symbolic gesture to pay its tribute to the great king, and to honour him.]

Verse no. 12:

शमितपक्षबलः शतकोटिना शिखरिणाम् कुलिशेन पुरन्दरः।

स शरवृष्टिमुचा धनुषा दिवषाम् स्वनवता नवतामरसाननः॥ ९-१२

śamitapakṣabalaḥ śatakoṭinā śikhariṇām kulīśena puramdarah |
sa śaravr̥ṣṭimucā dhanuṣā divṣām svनावता navatāmarasānanah || 9-12

9-12. Just like Indra, the king of heaven, had vanquished the huge flying mountains of ancient times by cutting their wings using his Vajra¹, a powerful mace-like weapon which had hundreds of sharp nail-like projections on its surface, likewise king Dasrath, whose face was as charming as a newly blooming lotus flower, used his mighty bow and showers of sharp arrows to vanquish all his enemies as well as their sympathisers.

[Note--It is believed that in the beginning of creation, there were some mountains that could fly like birds. These huge mountains obstructed the path of the sun and caused extended periods of darkness on this earth, thereby causing large scale death and havoc. In the heaven these flying mountains interfered with the movement of the chariots of gods. So Indra, being responsible for maintaining law and order in this world by the virtue of his position as the ruler of heaven, used his powerful weapon known as Vajra to chop-off the wings of such flying mountains, which then either fell to the ground on earth or drifted away far into the deep abyss of the universe. May be these residual mountains or their rocks that were pushed back to float in the depth of the cosmos were later known as asteroids and comets of different sizes and names.

Usually Indra's weapon called Vajra is likened to the thunderbolt because he is also the deity governing clouds and rain. The thunderbolt too has a mighty punch; it can burn and slice through any structure when it hits during a storm. The thunderbolt also has many sharp-edged branches that radiate out from the central shaft.

Similarly, Dasrath could shoot so many arrows in quick succession that they appeared to radiate out from a central shaft after becoming air-borne.]

Verse no. 13:

चरणयोर्नखरागसमृद्धिभिर्मुकुटरत्नमरीचिभिरस्पृशन्।

नृपतयः शतशो मरुतो यथा शतमखम् तमखण्डितपौरुषम्॥ ९-१३

caranayornakharāgasamṛddhibirmukūṭaratnamarīcibhirasprśan |
nṛpatayaḥ śataśo maruto yathā śatamakham tamakhaṇḍitapauruṣam || 9-13

9-13. Just like the wind-god and other gods of heaven paid their respects to Indra, their king, by bowing before the latter and touching his feet, likewise countless kings on earth would pay their respects to king Dasrath by bowing before him and placing their crowns at his feet. The polished nails of Dasrath's toes would heighten the glitter of the gems studded on these crowns. {Or conversely, the glitter of the gems reflected in the well polished toenails of Dasrath's feet, thereby enhancing each other's radiance.}

[Note--By putting their crowns at the feet of king Dasrath, these kings accepted him as their emperor and monarch. Dasrath on his part would treat them politely and honour them with robes; he would also give the authority to them to rule their respective kingdoms, albeit as his representatives and governors.]

Verse no. 14:

**निववृते स महार्णवरोधसः सचिवकारितबालसुताञ्जलीन्।
समनुकम्प्य सपत्नपरिग्रहाननलकानलकानवमाम् पुरीम्॥ ९-१४**

nivavṛte sa mahārṇavarodhasaḥ sacivakāritabālasutāñjalīn |
samanukampya sapatnaparigrahānanalakānalakānavamām purīm || 9-14

9-14. After his successful visit to the far-flung areas of his realm that extended to the shores of the distant ocean¹, where kings would welcome him and submit themselves before his authority by placing their crowns at his feet, or if he met any resistance Dasrath would use his bow and arrow to subdue the opponent and make him surrender², king Dasrath returned to his capital city of Ayodhya which was no less beautiful and opulent than Alkapuri, the city of Kuber (the god of wealth) in heaven.

[Note--¹Refer to: verse no. 11.

²Refer to: verse no. 12.]

Verse no. 15:

**उपगतोऽपि च मण्डलनाभितामनुदितान्यसितातपवारणः।
श्रियमवेक्ष्य स रन्ध्रचलामभुदनलसोऽनलसोमसमद्युतिः॥ ९-१५**

upagato'pi ca maṇḍalanābhitāmanuditānyasitātapavāraṇaḥ |
śriyamavekṣya sa randhracalāmabhudanalaso'nalasomasamadyutiḥ || 9-15

9-15. King Dasrath attained an eminent, most exalted, authoritative, honourable and a centralised position amongst all the kings of the land just like the position which an axle occupies in a wheel¹. {To wit, Dasrath was like an 'emperor', and all other rulers of the

land, the many kings and princes of the realm, were under his dominion and command.}

Dasrath had attained a glory and honour that was equivalent to that of the splendour of the sun in the sky, and he became welcomed by everyone like the soothing rays of the moon, the two celestial bodies which are most magnificent in the sky and occupy a prominent position in the various constellations of stars that dot the firmament.

He occupied such a high and exalted position in the pantheon of kings and princes of the land of that time that no one could use his own insignia and a royal parasol, a symbol of the individual's status and power, over his own head in the presence of king Dasrath².

In spite of his dominant position and high status that demanded submission, respect and obedience by default, yet king Dasrath, being wise, conscientious, practical and aware of the transient nature of this world as well as the unpredictability of fate and turn of fortune, was always alert on his part. He consistently maintained a low profile, was always humble, simple and down-to-earth in his attitude towards everything and while dealing with the day-to-day affairs of life. He was diligent and careful about his thoughts, actions and conducts. He never allowed lethargy, lassitude, indulgence in sense objects of pleasure and comfort, arrogance, ego, haughtiness, bad habits and company, and other such negative traits ever come near him and pollute him. He was conscious of the age-old adage that even a small loop-hole in his overall character could let his enemies exploit him, and the goddess of wealth and power could escape through a tiny hole in his conduct and handling of the affairs of the kingdom (just like water draining out from a tank through a crack, resulting in the reservoir, no matter how big it may be, being gradually emptied). {To wit, king Dasrath was unpretentious and always conscientious about his behaviour, words, decisions, actions and conduct.} [9-15]

[Note—¹The wheel turns around its axle. The spokes of this wheel are bound or fixed to this central axle or spindle, and always rotate in the same direction and with the same speed as the axle itself, and the coordination between the central axle and the spokes radiating out in all the directions from it towards the rim of the wheel, in turn makes the wheel move forward or backward in sync with them, in accordance with their movement.

In this metaphor, king Dasrath was like the axle, his principles, conscientiousness and conscience adherence to the laws of goodness and righteousness, were like the axis around which this axle turned (i.e. the basis of Dasrath's actions and decisions); all other kings were like the many spokes of the wheel (as they helped Dasrath to connect with the realm and the far-flung areas of the land); and the governance of the land at large in an orderly manner was like the turning of the wheel in a particular direction and speed strictly in accordance to the direction and speed with which the axle turns. Just like any wheel, with its constituent parts such as the spokes and the rim, would always and invariably move exactly as the axle turns on its axis, the land was governed by the other kings in an orderly manner exactly as king Dasrath ordained. All the kings under the dominion of king Dasrath worked in coordination with each other, and strictly under the guidelines established by their sovereign king Dasrath, to hold the entire mechanism of the wheel symbolising governance of the land moving forward smoothly and in an orderly manner. But in this set-up it is obvious that the central power that regulated all activities was king Dasrath, the rest were like the many pegs and components that

together made up the device called government, symbolised by the wheel moving forward, that was responsible for good governance.

²It is a norm of courtesy and a matter of good manners that when someone senior to others is present in a gathering, all other guests would stand up and show their respect to this honourable gentleman, let him occupy the highest or central seat, and never show-off or brag about themselves in his august presence. Hence, whenever king Dasrath was present anywhere, in the royal assembly or anywhere else, only he was entitled to have a royal umbrella or a parasol spread over his head and his royal insignia displayed by an attendant. All other kings, no matter how big they were, would refrain from any gesture or show of their own royal status or importance that would be deemed to be indecent or rude or un-courteous in Dasrath's presence as he was their 'emperor and senior to them all'.]

Verse no. 16:

**तमपहाय ककुत्स्थकुलोद्भवम् पुरुषमात्मभवम् च पतिव्रता।
नृपतिमन्यमसेवत देवता सकमला कमलाघवमर्थिषु॥ ९-१६**

tamapahāya kakutsthakulodbhavam puruṣamātmabhavam ca pativrata |
nrpatimanyamasevata devatā sakamalā kamalāghavamarthiṣu || 9-16

9-16. The chaste goddess Laxmi, who sits on a lotus, who is always liberal towards those who submit themselves before her (by giving them wealth with a liberal hand), and who is totally devoted and is faithful to her husband Lord Vishnu (the Supreme Being and the second God of the Trinity), served no one else other than her husband, Lord Vishnu. But the only exception in this world was king Dasrath, the scion of the dynasty of Kakutstha.

To wit, goddess Laxmi was very pleased with king Dasrath and ensured that he gets the full fruit of her grace. So therefore, Dasrath had no shortage of wealth and prosperity.

Verse no. 17:

**तमलभन्त पतिम् पतिदेवताः शिखरिणामिव सागरमापगाः।
मगधकोसलकेकयशासिनाम् दुहितरोऽहितरोपितमार्गणम्॥ ९-१७**

tamalabhanta patim patidevatāḥ śikhariṇāmiva sāgaramāpagāḥ |
magadhakosalakekayaśāsinaṁ duhitaro'hitaropitamārgaṇam || 9-17

9-17. Just like great rivers that have their origin in the mountains finally find their destination in the ocean (because major rivers fall into the ocean and find their resting place there after travelling through the land), so did the young princesses of the kingdoms of (south) Kaushal / Koshal, Magdha and Kaikeya, whose names were Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi respectively, found their destination when they married king

Dasrath who was famed as a warrior who would rain a shower of arrows on his enemies in order to conquer them.

[Note--During that time, these three kingdoms were regarded as big and influential, and were a part of the 16 Mahajanpads, or great kingdoms.

The kingdom of south Koshal covered the area around the upper Mahanadi river, eastern Madhya Pradesh, most of Chattisgarh, and the western part of Odisha of modern India. Its capital was at Sripura.

The kingdom of Magadha was located in modern day state of Bihar, in the fertile Gangetic plains. Its capital was at Patliputra. Later on down history, this land gave rise to great dynasties of India, such as the Haryanka dynasty (c.544-412 BCE), the Nanda dynasty (c. 424-322 BCE), the Mauryan dynasty (c. 322-185 BCE), and the Gupta dynasty (c. 4th -6th century CE).

The kingdom of Kaikeya was located in the north-western region of Punjab, between the Gandhara region and the Beas river. Its capital was at Rajgriha, also known as Girivraja. Later on, the rulers of Kaikeya kingdom fought on the side of the Pandavas during the epic Mahabharat war.

In ancient times, establishing matrimonial alliances were used as tools to expand the influence of a king as well as for mutual benefits. Hence, while his forefathers had only one wife, Dasrath had married three princess of three eminent kingdoms of his time to both expand his influence as well as to ward-off potential inimical kings. And in the event of a war, he would have the support of three other powerful kings with their armies, which might be the determining factor in cases where many rival kings get together to attack a single king.]

Verse no. 18:

प्रियतमाभिरसौ तिसृभिर्बभौ तिसृभिरेव भुवम् सह शक्तिभिः।
उपगतो विनिनीषुरिव प्रजा हरिहयोऽरिहयोगविचक्षणः॥ ९-१८

priyatamābhirasau tisṛbhirbabhau tisṛbhireva bhuvam saha śaktibhiḥ |
upagato vininiṣuriva prajā harihayo'rihayogavicakṣaṇaḥ || 9-18

9-18. King Dasrath, who was an expert in the art of vanquishing his enemies, looked as impressive as Indra, the king of gods, as if Indra himself had descended to earth with his three qualities needed to govern the world, i.e. the power of authority and the ability to enforce this authority, the wisdom and acumen needed for good governance, and the enthusiasm and will needed to do so.

[Note--In this analogy, Dasrath is likened to Indra, while his three queens to the three qualities needed in a king so that he can rule his kingdom properly, i.e. wisdom and acumen, ability and authority, enthusiasm and the will needed for good governance.]

Verse no. 19:

स किल सम्युगमुर्ध्नि सहायताम् मघवतः प्रतिपद्य महारथः।
स्वभुजवीर्यमगापयदुच्छ्रितम् सुरवधुरवधुतभयाः शरैः॥ ९-१९

sa kila samyugamurdhni sahāyatām maghavataḥ pratipadya mahārathaḥ |
svabhujavīryamagāpayaducchritam suravadhuravadhutabhayāḥ śaraiḥ || 9-19

9-19. The great chariot-riding warrior (mahārathaḥ) king Dasrath had helped Indra to eliminate his enemies (the demons) in a battle, which in effect made Dasrath a great friend of Indra, the king of heaven. When the enemies of the gods were eliminated, the goddesses of heaven heaved a sigh of relief and sang laurels in the honour of the valiant king Dasrath.

[Note--These demons were inimical to the gods, and they would frequently raid heaven and torment the gods and kidnap their wives. In the war to curb their evil deeds, Indra sought the help of king Dasrath as he was well aware of the latter's skills in warfare as well as his powers, strength and valour. Dasrath vanquished the demons, but in the process he made permanent enemies in their ranks. Though the demons refrained from attacking heaven openly out of fear of Dasrath, but they continued to torment humans on earth. This explains why Lord Ram, the son of Dasrath, had to go to Lanka to eliminate Ravana, the king of demons with his capital in the island of Lanka, in order to complete the unfulfilled task of his father king Dasrath.]

Verse no. 20:

क्रतुषु तेन विसर्जितमौलिना भुजसमाहृतदिग्वसुना कृताः।
कनकयुपसमुच्छ्रयशोभिना वितमसा तमसासरयुतटाः॥ ९-२०

kratuṣu tena visarjitamaulinā bhujasamāhṛtadigvasunā kṛtāḥ |
kanakayupasamucchrayaśobhino vitamasā tamasāsarayutaṭāḥ || 9-20

9-20. King Dasrath, who was free from any kind of vices and bad habits, had collected huge amounts of wealth during his military campaigns (in the form of gifts and tributes given to him by other kings). When he returned home, he organised a grand fire sacrifice to commemorate his victory. This fire sacrifice was held on the banks of rivers Saryu and Tamsa. During the ceremony, king Dasrath removed his crown and placed it on the ground as a symbolic gesture to pay respect to the gods and the deities who had helped him to gain success. He had also erected many splendid pillars made of gold around the area to mark the event.

Verse no. 21:

अजिनदण्डभृतम् कुशमेखलाम् यतगिरम् मृगशृङ्गपरिग्रहाम्।
अधिवसन्स्तनुमध्वरदीक्षितामसमभासमभासयदीश्वरः॥ ९-२१

ajinadaṇḍabhṛtam kuśamekhalām yatagiram mṛgaśṛṅgaparigrahām |
adhivasamstanumadhvaradīkṣitāmasamabhāsamabhāsayaśīvaraḥ || 9-21

9-21. When king Dasrath got initiated in the ceremony and took the religious vows necessary for the chief patron of a fire sacrifice, he removed his royal robes and attired himself in the skin of a deer, held a staff of a mendicant in his hand, wore a girdle made of kush grass, observed silence during the entire course of the rituals, and kept horns of an antelope nearby. {These antelope horns are used to scratch any part of the body should it begin to itch; also to stoke the fire in case it begins to die down.}

At that time it appeared that Lord Shiva, the patron deity of Yogis (those who do meditation) and Sanysis (those who live a life of renunciation like that of an ascetic), had entered king Dasrath's body. To wit, king Dasrath looked so auspicious, divine and holy at that time that he appeared to be manifestation of Lord Shiva himself.

[Note--Lord Shiva is depicted as being an ascetic who is in a perpetual state of meditation, with his eyes closed, sitting quietly submerged in contemplation, oblivious of his surrounding, wearing the hide of a deer, holding a trident in his hand. This was also the portrait of king Dasrath once he took the religious vows and got initiated in the rituals of the fire sacrifice as its chief patron.]

Verse no. 22:

अवभृथप्रयतो नियतेन्द्रियः सुरसमाजसमाक्रमणोचितः।

नमयति स्म स केवलमुन्नतम् वनमुचे नमुचेररये शिरः॥ ९-२२

avabhṛthaprayato niyatendriyaḥ surasamājasamākramaṇocitaḥ |
namayati sma sa kevalamunnatam vanamuce namuceraraye śiraḥ || 9-22

9-22. At the end of the fire sacrifice ceremony, king Dasrath, who practiced self-control over his sense organs and who was qualified to sit in the ranks of gods, took a purification bath, and bowed his head before only before Indra, the lord of heaven, the slayer of demon Namuchi¹ and the god who showers rain on earth to sustain life on it, and no one else. This is because Dasrath himself was a very senior king, his status on earth being equivalent to that of Indra in heaven.

Other kings would bow before Dasrath as he was their monarch and emperor; he would not bow before others who were junior to him, just like the case of gods bowing before Indra, but Indra not bowing before them.

[Note--Namuchi was a clever demon. He secured a boon from the creator Brahma that he would be killed neither in the day or the night, nor by anything dry or wet. During the great god-demon war, Indra cornered the demon who went and hid behind the blinding light of the sun. He offered to come out of his hiding place if Indra came near, but the harsh light of the sun drained Indra's energy. When Indra realised the cunningness of the demon, he consulted Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, and Ashwini kumars, the heavenly medicine men, to devise a loophole so that this demon could be eliminated.

On their advise, Indra pursued the demon to the shore of the foaming ocean and pushed him in the foam. Namuchi got suffocated and died there. The foam of the ocean is neither wet nor dry, and the time was twilight, which is neither day nor night, so the condition of Brahma's boon were fulfilled.

Since Namuchi was technically a Brahmin, being the son of sage Kashyap and his wife Danu, his killing brought the sin of killing a Brahmin upon the head of Indra. So therefore, the severed head of Namuchi pursued Indra till the time he did penance and purified himself by bathing in the confluence of the sacred rivers known as Arunsangam.]

Verse no. 23:

असकृदेकरथेन तरस्विना हरिहयाग्रसरेण धनुर्भृता।
दिनकराभिमुखा रणरेणवो रुरुधिरे रुधिरेण सुरदिवषाम्॥ ९-२३

asakṛdekarathena tarasvinā harihayāgrasareṇa dhanurbhṛtā |
dinakarābhimukhā raṇareṇavo rurudhire rudhireṇa suradviṣām || 9-23

9-23. The great and invincible warrior king Dasrath, who held a formidable bow, had himself helped Indra by taking charge and leading alone from the front on many occasions during Indra's wars with the demons¹. During these fierce battles, the dust raised during combat had covered the sky and blurred the sun. King Dasrath had used his arrows to slay so many demons that the blood which was sprayed all around had wetted the dry dust and made it settle down, thereby removing the cloud of dust from the front of the sun and helped its rays to illuminate the world.

[Note--¹Refer also to: verse no. 19 herein above.]

Verse no. 24:

वसन्त ऋतु वर्णन

vasanta ṛtu varṇana {Vasant is the spring season; Varnana means to describe. Hence, the following verse primarily says that Mother Nature was so pleased with king Dasrath that she sent 'Spring' as her messenger to honour the king by colouring the world with a multitude of colourful flowers to celebrate the occasion of Dasrath performing the fire sacrifice.}

अथ समाववृते कुसुमैर्नवैस्तमिव सेवितुमेकनराधिपम्।
यमकुबेरजलेश्वरवज्रिणाम् समधुरम् मधुरञ्चितविक्रमम्॥ ९-२४

atha samāvavṛte kusumairnavaistamiva sevitumekanarādhipam |
yamakuberajaleśvaravajriṇām samadhuram madhurañcitavikramam || 9-24

9-24. When king Dasrath—who was an unchallenged and undisputed emperor of the realm, whose authority and command extended far and wide in all the four directions of the land, and whose valour, power, strength, glory, importance, wealth, abilities, sway and fame were equivalent to that of Yama², Kuber³, Varun⁴ and Indra⁵—was performing the fire sacrifice, Mother Nature was very pleased with him. In order to honour and pay respect to Dasrath, to show her appreciation for his noble character as well as to celebrate his fire sacrifice, she sent baskets or bouquets full of colourful flowers symbolically through her messenger, the Spring season¹. [9-24]

[Note—¹Mother Nature showed her appreciation for king Dasrath by colouring the earth by sending the ‘Vasant’ or the Spring season to represent her. It is the vernal season when flowers bloom and new leaves sprout on trees after the harsh winter days. The days become warmer and longer. The sun is bearable. There is greenery everywhere. Life becomes vibrant and birds chirp all around. This pleasant sight implied that Mother Nature was very happy at the time Dasrath was performing the fire sacrifice.

Mother Nature appreciated king Dasrath for his stellar role on earth that was equivalent to the role that great gods, such as Yama, Kuber, Varun and Indra, play in the heaven.

A very interesting conclusion can be drawn here—viz. the time when Dasrath performed his fire sacrifice was the Spring season of the year.

Another important point to note is that when someone sends his or her representative to a great person, then flowers are the best means of showing respect and honour. The poet Kalidas has used this age-old tradition by using the metaphor of the Vasant season to show that all the gods were pleased with king Dasrath and his fire sacrifice.

The following verses too extend this idea of gods appreciating king Dasrath’s fire sacrifice and helping him successfully complete it. Mother Nature too lent her approval by making the season and weather pleasant and conducive.

²Yama is the ‘god of death’ before whom everyone surrenders, and no one can oppose him, or resist him when he decides to take control of the life of a living being. To wit, when the time of death comes, Yama spares no one; not even the mightiest and the most powerful is exempt from his commands. In the context of king Dasrath this simile means that just as it is impossible to resist Yama should he decide to kill someone, and everyone is compelled to obey his commands, likewise no king on earth dared to resist or oppose Dasrath and his commands.

²Kuber is the ‘god of wealth and the treasurer of heaven’. Here it means that king Dasrath’s riches and wealth had no match in this world. He was like a treasurer of the wealth of the world.

³Varun is the ‘god of water’. Hence, he governs the oceans and the rivers that are crucial for sustaining life in this creation. Water is one of the fundamental elements of creation (the others being air, fire, earth and sky or space). Just like the case of water which plays a dual role of sustaining life on the one hand when it is pleased with the creation, and on the other hand causing havoc and wiping away life when it is annoyed as becomes

evident during heavy floods, torrential rainfall, storms, huge waves that overturn ships, prolonged droughts or lack of drinkable water such as the water of the ocean, and so on and so forth, so was the case of king Dasrath. Dasrath sustained and looked after the realm compassionately and with empathy for all. If he was happy and pleased with someone, his charity, magnanimity and helpful nature would know no bounds as he would shower his goodwill on the needy, the humble, the persecuted, and those who are in distress, but if he felt offended in some way then all hell would break loose for the offender, and no one would then save the latter from Dasrath's wrath. But the latter occasion rarely happened, just like the case of 'water' which does more good to the world than harming it.

⁴Indra is the 'king of gods'. By the virtue of his position, he is the most powerful god. Similarly, Dasrath was the 'king of king' on earth, and he occupied the same position on earth as Indra did in the heaven. All the gods obeyed Indra's command, and whenever any harm came to any god, the latter would approach Indra for help. Likewise, all the kings of earth obeyed king Dasrath, and sought his help whenever they needed it.]

Verse no. 25:

**जिगमिषुर्धनदाध्युषिताम् दिशम् रथयुजा परिवर्तितवाहनः।
दिनमुखानि रविर्हिमनिग्रहैर्विमलयन्मलयम् नगमत्यजत्॥ ९-२५**

jigamiṣurdhanadādhyaṣitām diśam rathayujā parivartitavāhanaḥ |
dinamukhāni ravirhimanigrahairvimalayanmalayam nagamatyajat || 9-25

9-25. The Sun-God was desirous of moving to the north, a region said to be governed by Kuber, the treasurer of heaven, during the northern solstice. So his charioteer known as Arun (symbolising dawn) made a U-turn to leave Mt. Malaya in the south and move northwards. This helped in making the days brighter and the frost that had appeared in the winter season to clear.

[Note--It is believed that the winter days are shorter and dull in the north because the sun has gone behind Mt. Malaya in the south. When the time of the northern solstice comes, the sun's chariot moves towards the north, which makes the days brighter, longer, and warmer. The frost of the winter season also vanishes.]

Verse no. 26:

**कुसुमजन्म ततो नवपल्लवास्तदनु षट्पदकोकिलकुजितम्।
इति यथाक्रममाविरभुन्मधुर्द्रुमवतीमवतीर्य वनस्थलीम्॥ ९-२६**

kusumajanma tato navapallavāstadanu ṣaṭpadakokilakujitam |
iti yathākramamāvirabhunmadhurdrumavatīmavatīrya vanasthalīm || 9-26

9-26. First appeared a new blossom of flowers, this was followed by newly sprouting soft leaves, then came swarms of humming and buzzing honey-bees, and then the sweet-throated cuckoos began to sing melodiously. In this way, one after another the different components of Nature made their appearance to herald the onset of the beautiful and charming spring season in the forests and the gardens that were rich with various kinds of trees.

Verse no. 27:

नयगुणोपचितामिव भुपतेः सदुपकारफलाम् श्रियमर्थिनः।

अभिययुः सरसो मधुसम्भृताम् कमलिनीमलिनीरपतत्रिणः॥ ९-२७

nayaguṇopacitāmiva bhupateḥ sadupakāraphalām śriyamarthinaḥ |
abhiyayuh saraso madhusambhṛtām kamalinīmalinīrapatatriṇaḥ || 9-27

9-27. Just like the case of alms seekers spreading their arms before the benevolent and charitable king Dasrath, whose Laxmi (wealth) had multiplied manifold times due to his good nature, excellent character and adherence to the laws and rules of good conduct, righteousness, probity, propriety and ethics, in the hope of receiving gifts and largesse, so likewise the bees and swans hovered around the lotus flowers found in abundance in the various lakes and ponds during the spring season.

[Note--In this verse, king Dasrath is likened to the lotus flower, and the alms seekers who crowded around him in the hope of receiving gifts and largesse to the many bees and swans that crowded around the lotus flowers in the waters of the lakes and ponds during the spring season.

Even as king Dasrath did his best to oblige everyone and expected nothing in return, so likewise the lotus flowers tried their best to oblige the bees by providing pollen, and the clear water of the many lakes and ponds tried its best to oblige the swans by providing the bird with a clean environment to swim cheerfully and happily.

This verse also emphasises that a person of high ethical standards, one who observes rules and laws, one who follows the principles of Dharma, is always looked upon favourably by goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of wealth and prosperity.]

Verse no. 28:

कुसुममेव न केवलमार्तवम् नवमशोकतरोः स्मरदीपनम्।

किसलयप्रसवोऽपि विलासिनाम् मदयिता दयिताश्रवणार्पितः॥ ९-२८

kusumameva na kevalamārtavam navamaśokataroḥ smaradīpanam |
kisalayaprasavo'pi vilāsinām madayitā dayitāśravaṇārpitaḥ || 9-28

9-28. During the spring season, the environment is so pleasant and exciting that it naturally arouses passions. The sight of every component of Nature plays its part in it--

from the newly blossoming flowers on the branches of the Ashoka tree, to the sight of beautiful flowers that charming young women use as earrings to adorn themselves, as well as the soft green leaves that would rouse passions in young women when their lovers use these tender leaves to touch their beloved ones.

[Note--A lot of imagination has been employed by the poet Kalidas in this verse to show how passions are aroused. A loving and romantically engaged couple goes to a garden and stands below a Ashoka tree. The male companion plucks a flower and places it between the ear and the temple of his beloved, and to complete the process of courting he would pluck some tender leaves and softly move them on the face and hands of his partner. Sure enough, these loving gestures of romance would arouse passions and longing in the heart of both the partners.]

Verse no. 29:

विरचिता मधुनोपवनश्रियामभिनवा इव पत्रविशेषकाः।

मधुलिहाम् मधुदानविशारदाः कुरबका रवकारणताम् ययुः॥ ९-२९

viracitā madhunopavanaśriyāmabhinavā iva patraviśeṣakāḥ |
madhulihām madhudānaviśārādāḥ kurabakā ravakāraṇatām yayuḥ || 9-29

9-29. The 'spring season' created an artistic picture of new trees sprouting fresh foliage and flowers known as 'katsaraiya' (also known as Vajradanti or Porcupine flower; botanical name is Baleria prionitis; it has yellow or light orange coloured petals) around which droves of honey bees hummed and buzzed. The humming and buzzing of these bees reverberated in the forest.

It was like the case of countless alms seekers crowding around a donor even if the latter does not oblige them. These alms seekers won't go away; they continue to speak loudly and beg for gifts, creating a buzz around the place.

[Note--These bees had collected in the hope of getting honey from the tree, but unfortunately this tree has neither nectar in its flowers nor honey dripping from its branches or stem. Perhaps Kalidas has used this as a metaphor to stress what greed and delusions can do. The bees became deluded by the colour of the flowers and the appearance of new leaves, so they arrived in large numbers. Not finding any honey or nectar, they lingered on, and this created the humming and buzzing that resonated in the forest.

Similarly, greedy alms seekers come in droves when they hear a rumour that someone is donating something. Even after discovering that nothing is being gifted by anyone, these people continue to hang on in the hope that something would eventually come.

In this verse, the spring season has been personified as a 'creator', a reference to Brahma, the creator of the world, who could create new things.]

Verse no. 30:

सुवदनावदनासवसम्भृतस्तदनुवादिगुणः कुसुमोद्गमः।

मधुकरैरकरोन्मधुलुपैर्वकुलमाकुलमायतपङ्क्तिभिः॥ ९-३०

suvadanāvadanāsavasambhṛtastadanuvādiguṇaḥ kusumodgamah |
madhukarairakaronmadhulolupairvakulamākulamāyatapaṅktibhiḥ || 9-30

9-30. When beautiful women fill their mouths with wine and gargle with it, then spout this wine on the Vakul tree (called the Bullet Wood tree) by opening their lips, new fragrant and colourful flowers¹ begin to bloom on the tree's branches. These flowers, having their origin in the wine spit by charming women, acquire the characteristics of their creator, i.e. they bear attractive colour, have enticing fragrance, and look beautiful. The strong and sweet fragrance of these flowers mimicked the fragrance of wine and attracted huge numbers of honey bees which swarmed all around the trees that bore these magnificent flowers in order to enjoy the intoxicating nectar stored in the Vakul flower.

[Note--According to poetic folklore, the Bullet Wood trees would bear flowers in the spring season only after women spit wine on them after first filling their mouths with this intoxicating liquid, gargling with it, and then spouting it on the trees.

The Vakul / Bakul flower's botanical name is *Mimusops elengi*, and it grows on the Bullet Wood tree which is a sturdy and an evergreen tree. It is a star-shaped, small, creamy coloured flower with pointed petals, often arranged in clusters, and known for its intense fragrance that dominates the surroundings, as well as its ability to retain its smell for a long time just like the case of the smell of wine that lingers for a long time in the mouth of drinkers.

The fruits of this tree are yellow in colour and like sweet berries, resembling in taste to sweet raisins or ripe grapes that are used to make wine. Hence the simile is apt.]

Verse no. 31:

उपहितम् शिशिरापगमश्रिया मुकुलजालमशोभत किम्शुके।

प्रणयिनीव नखक्षतमण्डनम् प्रमदया मदयापितलज्जया॥ ९-३१

upahitam śiśirāpagamaśriyā mukulajālamaśobhata kimśuke |
praṇayinīva nakhakṣatamaṇḍanam pramadayā madayāpitalajjayā || 9-31

9-31. With the onset of the spring season, the Kinshuk tree (also called Palash plant, or Flame of the Forest in English) sprout an abundance of new buds all over it, just like a lady, driven by intoxication of passion, would put aside all inhibitions and hold her lover so tightly that her nails would make scratch marks on the latter's body.

[Note--In poetic lore, the spring season is the season of creativity and energy. The Kinshuk or the Palash plant, called 'Flame of the Forest' or the 'Parrot Tree' or the 'Sacred Tree', would sprout new buds. Its botanical name is *Butea monosperma*. It has bright

orange-red flowers. Its colour makes it resemble like a tree on fire. This is why it has been compared with the 'fire of passion' of a lady in love.

The previous season of winter was cold and chilly, but onset of spring heralds new energy and life. The lady would remain calm in ordinary circumstances, but once her passions are aroused, she forgets all modesty and tightly embraces her lover, the hold being so gripping at times that she would often scratch her lover with her nails.]

Verse no. 32:

व्रणगुरुप्रमदाधरदुःसहम् जघननिर्विषयीकृतमेखलम्।

न खलु तावदशेषमपोहितुम् रविरलम् विरलम् कृतवान्हिमम्॥ ९-३२

vraṇagurupramadādharaḍṣaḥam jaghananirviṣayīkṛtamekhalam |
na khalu tāvadaśeṣamapohitum raviralam viralam kṛtavānhimam || 9-32

9-32. With the onset of the spring season, the sun was able to slightly decrease, but not entirely remove, the intensity of the cold and the chill of the winter season that had been so severe as to have led to formation of frost, as well as had compelled young ladies to remove their metal waist-bands as it caused great discomfort to them, especially when they bathed or exposed their waists, and which also caused their lips, already swollen by their lovers' bites, to crack and develop blisters due to the frosty dryness in the atmosphere.

[Note--Put simply, this verse means that the cold and the chill of the winter season still lingered, still persisted during the first few weeks of the advent of the spring season. It was not as hot as summer, and neither as chilly and cold as winter.

During the height of the winter season, the air is so extremely cold that water vapour condenses to form frost, i.e. the atmosphere is frosty. In this chilly weather, the metal of the waist-band worn by ladies becomes so cold that it bites against their skin, forcing them to remove it. Similarly, lips crack due to cold and lack of moisture in the air. The cracked lips hurt more when the lover kisses and bites them in passion, leading to formation of blisters.

It ought to be remembered that Kalidas was famous for use of metaphors, similes and analogies to paint a vivid picture and drive home the point of what he wants to convey--in this case he wishes to tell us that the time of the year he is referring to is the period of time during the very early days of spring when winter still persists and has not fully gone away.

Since Kalidas was also known for his vivid depiction of the erotica and the exotica, of the beauty of the feminine form, of love and passion, as well as of Nature and its beauty, he has cited the frost to indicate how cold the atmosphere of the previous months were, and then refers to the girdles worn by ladies being so cold that they had to remove these metal ornaments as they caused discomfort to them, and then he refers to the lips of the ladies that had cracked because of the cold environment and became swollen with blisters when the ladies' lovers bit them in passion.]

Verse no. 33:

अभिनयान्परिचेतुमिवोद्यता मलयमारुतकम्पितपल्लवा।

अमदयत्सहकारलता मनः सकलिका कलिकामजितामपि॥ ९-३३

abhinayānparicetumivodyatā malayamārutakampitapallavā |
amadayatsahakāralatā manaḥ sakalikā kalikāmajitāmapī || 9-33

9-33. The thin, green branches of the mango trees, with their newly sprouting leaves and fresh buds of the mango fruit, swayed in the southern breeze blowing in from the Malayachal mountain (malayamārutakampitapallavā), as if they were mimicking the tempting movements of royal court dancers, in order to give joy to even sages, hermits and ascetics who had renounced all kinds of pleasures related to this world.

{To wit, just like royal court dancers entertain courtiers of the royal court by their enticing dance moves, the branches of the mango trees too swayed majestically in the soft southern breeze blowing during the spring season as if Nature wished to infuse some element of entertainment in the otherwise drab life of sages, ascetics and hermits who practice renunciation and avoid pleasures of the world. So therefore, the swaying branches of the mango trees, with their new leaves and mango buds, gave a lot of joy to sages, hermits and ascetics living in the forest just like the dance moves of court dancers temp the mind of courtiers attending their concerts in the royal court.}

[Note--The Malayachal mountains are believed to be the southern most part of the Western Ghats of India, in modern-day state of Kerala.]

Verse no. 34:

प्रथममन्यभृताभिरुदीरिताः प्रविरला इव मुग्धवधूकथाः।

सुरभिगन्धिषु शुश्रुविरे गिरः कुसुमितासु मिता वनराजिषु॥ ९-३४

prathamamanyabhṛtābhirudīritāḥ praviralā iva mugdhavadhūkathāḥ |
surabhi-gandhiṣu śuśruvire girāḥ kusumitāsu mitā vanarājiṣu || 9-34

9-34. With the arrival of the spring season, the cuckoo birds began singing enticingly here and there in the forest groves rich with the sweet fragrance of flowers and fruits, just like the case of newly wed young ladies speaking sweetly during their menstrual periods, or during the period of courtship of young ladies in love.

[Note--With the arrival of spring, there is greenery all around in the forest, and cuckoo birds begin to speak in their characteristic sweet voices. It reminds the poet of the way a lady in love would speak sweetly to her male partner. This woman would normally remain quiet, speaking only when necessary, usually less than an ordinary woman would do in her routine life, but whenever she speaks, she does so sweetly and in an enticing manner.]

Verse no. 35:

श्रुतिसुखभ्रमरस्वनगीतयः कुसुमकोमलदन्तरुचो बभुः।
उपवनान्तलताः पवनाहतैः किसलयैः सलयैरिव पाणिभिः॥ ९-३५

śrutisukhabhramarasvanagītayāḥ kusumakomaladantarūco babhuḥ |
upavanāntalatāḥ pavanāhataiḥ kisalayaiḥ salayairiva pāṇibhiḥ || 9-35

9-35. The creepers in the groves and gardens looked exceptionally charming and lively like beautiful maidens, with the buzzing of the bees hovering over them appearing to mimic their songs, the blooming lotus flowers personalising their teeth when these maidens smiled, their movement caused by the breeze appearing to resemble the different gestures of their hands, and the flapping of their leaves mimicking the clapping of hands of these symbolic maidens.

[Note--In this verse, the creepers are likened to young maidens. In this metaphoric representation, the sound of the buzzing bees is likened to the sweet songs of these maidens, the lotus flowers to the teeth of these maidens when they smiled, the soft movement of the creepers in the wind to the various gestures of the ladies, and the shaking and rubbing of the leaves to the clapping of the palms and movements of the hands of the symbolic maidens.]

Verse no. 36:

ललितविभ्रमबन्धविचेक्षणम् सुरभिगन्धपराजितकेसरम्।
पतिषु निर्विविशुर्मधुमङ्गनाः स्मरसखम् रसखण्डनवर्जितम्॥ ९-३६

lalitavibhramabandhavicēkṣaṇam surabhi-gandhaparājītakesaram |
patiṣu nirvivīśurmadhumāṅganāḥ smarasakham rasakhaṇḍanavarjitaṁ || 9-36

9-36. Wine, which has the ability to produce intoxication that in turn stokes passions in love, and the sweet smell of which surpasses that of the pollen or the sap of the Parijat tree ('surabhi-gandhaparājītakesaram'), was drunk in moderation by women so that they do not get too highly intoxicated while serving their husbands and meeting their love-centric demands. {To wit, the women made it sure that the wine drunk by them would not interfere with their retaining control over their senses.}

[Note--The Parijat (or Parijaat) tree is called the night-flowering Jasmine tree; its also called Coral Jasmine or Harisingar in the vernacular language. Its botanical name is Nyctanthes arbortristis. It is regarded as a sacred plant with highly fragrant flowers that bloom exclusively in the night. These flowers are white-orange in colour, and are shed before dawn. It is believed that its fragrance is so attractive that gods love it in heaven. It is a tree of heaven, and it was brought to earth after the churning of the cosmic ocean by

Lord Krishna or Arjun. Since it is so loved by the gods, it is often called the Kalpa Tree, the all wish-fulfilling tree of the gods.

Of special interest is the time of its flowers to bloom, which is night. This is also the time when people usually drink wine and enjoy company of their love interests.]

Verse no. 37:

शुशुभिरे स्मितचारुतराननाः स्त्रिय इव श्लथशिञ्जितमेखलाः।
विकचतामरसा गृहदीर्घिका मदकलोदकलोलविहङ्गमाः॥ ९-३७

śuśubhire smitacārutarānanāḥ striya iva ślathaśiñjitamekhalāḥ |
vikacatāmarasā gr̥hadīrghikā madakalodakalolavihamgamāḥ || 9-37

9-37. The swimming pools attached to houses had lotus flowers in full bloom, as well as swans and other water-birds (such as duck) that swam around and made their own distinctive sounds to express their enjoyment. This was reminiscent of swimming pools where beautiful young ladies with charming faces would laugh, smile and chatter in excitement even as they enjoyed playing water-sport and swimming merrily, while the small bells on their waist-girdles made jingling sounds to add music to their sporting activities.

[Note--It is a combination picture where the lotus flowers and the swans and other water-birds are used together to represent beautiful young ladies enjoying playing and swimming in pools. Obviously, these women would not be silent; they would be laughing and joking merrily. To the general atmosphere of merry-making would be added the jingling of bells tied to the waist-band of these ladies, as if musical instruments too were being played.]

Verse no. 38:

उपययौ तनुताम् मधुखण्डिता हिमकरोदयपाण्डुमुखच्छविः।
सदृशमिष्टसमागमनिर्वृतिम् वनितयानितया रजनीवधुः॥ ९-३८

upayayau tanutām madhukhaṇḍitā himakarodayapāṇḍumukhacchaviḥ |
sadr̥śamiṣṭasamāgamānirvṛtim vanitayānitayā rajanīvadhuh || 9-38

9-38. Even as a lady-in-love becomes thin and emaciated if her desire for a having a loving partner remains unrequited or un-fulfilled, the maiden-of-the-night (i.e. the symbolic maiden representing the night) begins to get progressively thinner (i.e. shorter in duration) and her face represented by the moon becomes gradually paler during the spring season as compared to the previous time of winter (when the nights are longer, and the moon is brighter in the sky).

[Note--Here, the night has been personified as a woman, and her face is likened to the moon. During the winter season, the nights are longer and the moon shines brilliantly in the clear night sky. But as spring arrives and progresses in time, the nights get shorter, and with shorter nights the time for the moon to shine too gets shorter.

Since the nights are shorter, the time a lover gets to spend with the partner too gets limited; they have limited time to enjoy each other's company during the spring season as compared to the winter season. This is what is being referred to here in this verse.]

Verse no. 39:

अपतुषारतया विशदप्रभैः सुरतसङ्गपरिश्रमनोदिभिः।

कुसुमचापमतेजयदम्शुभिर्हिमकरो मकरोर्जितकेतनम्॥ ९-३९

apatuṣāratayā viśadaprabhaiḥ suratasaṅgapariśramanodibhiḥ |
kusumacāpamatejayadamśubhirhimakaro makarorjitaketanam || 9-39

9-39. When the frost disappeared during the spring season, the face of the moon shined more brilliantly. Its invigorating rays got rid of laziness and lethargy (so characteristic of the winter period), and these rays also infused fresh life to the weapon (i.e. the bow-and-arrow) of Kamdeo (the patron deity of love and passion; Cupid), making it potent and powerful.

[Note--Kamdeo is the deity of lovers. Poets say that when someone is overcome with passion, desire and love, then such a person has become a victim of Kamdeo's arrows shot from his bow. These arrows are not the sort of conventional arrows used to shoot an enemy, but they are made of flowers so as not to harm the victim. The arrows of Kamdeo simply ignite passions and desires in their targets.

Just like the rays of the moon which are cool and soothing, the arrows of Kamdeo, although known as his 'weapon', are primarily cool and comforting. They don't burn and hurt like the rays of the sun, which would be aptly applied to conventional arrows meant to harm an enemy, but they (i.e. Kamdeo's arrows) act smoothly and softly like the rays of the moon.]

Verse no. 40:

हुतहुताशनदीप्ति वनश्रियः प्रतिनिधिः कनकाभरणस्य यत्।

युवतयः कुसुमं दधुराहितम् तदलके दलकेसरपेशलम्॥ ९-४०

hutahutāśanadīpti vanaśriyaḥ pratinidhiḥ kanakābharaṇasya yat |
yuvatayaḥ kusumaṁ dadhurāhitam tadalake dalakesarapeśalam || 9-40

9-40. The beautiful flowers that have a golden colour like that of a raging fire¹, which have charming petals and fragrant pollen, and are symbolically worn by the deity of the forest as her earrings--these flowers are also worn by young and beautiful ladies as ornaments of their hairs (i.e. these flowers are used as hair-pins and stuck between the plaits of their long hairs, or in the buns formed by rolling the plaits of hairs on the top or back of the head).

[Note--Refer also to verse no. 31 herein above. The flower referred to here is called the Kinshuk flower of the Palash plant, called 'Flame of the Forest' or the 'Parrot Tree' or the 'Sacred Tree'. Its botanical name is *Butea monosperma*. It has bright orange-red flowers. Its colour makes it resemble like a tree on fire. This is why it said that this flower has a fiery appearance. It is very beautiful, and since its fiery, golden colour becomes prominent and starkly visible against the comparatively dark and shaded environment of the forest, it is said that the deity of the forest adorns herself with it. Further, ladies usually use golden ornaments to adorn themselves, making this flower a good choice to decorate the hairs of young women.]

Verse no. 41:

अलिभिरञ्जनबिन्दुमनोहरैः कुसुमपङ्क्तिनिपातिभिरङ्कितः।
न खलु शोभयति स्म वनस्थलीम् न तिलकस्तिलकः प्रमदामिव॥ ९-४१

alibhirañjanabindumanoharaiḥ kusumapañktinipātibhiraṅkitaḥ |
na khalu śobhayati sma vanasthalīm na tilakastilakaḥ pramadāmiva || 9-41

9-41. The swarms of black bees alighting on the trees of the forest in order to seek pollen from their fragrant flowers resembled the black dot made of oil mixed with a black pigment that the deity of the forest had put on her forehead just above the bridge of the nose. These black spots did not look ugly on the face of the deity of the forest, but on the contrary they added beauty to the already charming countenance of the deity, which resembled the alluring beauty of a married women in all her finery.

[Note--In Indian culture, married women use a black pigment mixed with oil to make small dots in the middle of their foreheads, just above the bridge of the nose. In this verse, this tradition has been cited to describe how beautiful the scene in the forest looks when black bees alight on trees in search of nectar and pollen from their fragrant flowers. Since a forest's identity is its trees, hence the tree is a personalised form of the deity of the forest. When the black bees sit on the tree, they look like a black dot on it, which reminds the poet of the black dot marked by married women on their foreheads.]

Verse no. 42:

अमदयन्मधुगन्धसनाथया किसलयाधरसम्गतया मनः।
कुसुमसम्भृतया नवमल्लिका स्मितरुचा तरुचारुविलासिनी॥ ९-४२

amadayanmadhugandhasanāthayā kisalayādharasamgatayā manah |
kusumasambhṛtayā navamallikā smitarucā tarucāruvilāsinī || 9-42

9-42. Just as a heroine, whose lips have become red as she has drunk a little wine in order to overcome shyness, smiles enticingly while performing an act on stage in order to entertain her audience, so likewise the young creeper wrapped around a tree, with its fragrant colourful flowers and deep green or reddish leaves representing smiles and lips respectively, swayed majestically to enrapture the heart and the mind of onlookers.

Verse no. 43:

अरुणरागनिषेधिभिरम्शुकैः श्रवणलब्धपदैश्च यवाङ्कुरैः।
परभृताविरुतैश्च विलासिनः स्मरबलैरबलैकरसाः कृताः॥ ९-४३

aruṇarāgaṇiṣedhibhiraṃśukaiḥ śravaṇalabdhapadaiśca yavāṅkuraiḥ |
parabhṛtāviritaiśca vilāsinah smarabalairabalaikarasāḥ kṛtāḥ || 9-43

9-43. {In the spring season} Kamdeo, the patron deity of love, desire and passions (equivalent to the Roman God of love known as Cupid), who was attired in robes that had a colour deeper than the orange-reddish hue of the morning sunlight, who adorned himself with earrings made of fresh shoots of barley, and who moved forward with an army of cuckoos singing enticingly--spread such a magical spell of charm that made males become overcome with passions and love for their female partners, losing all their patience and inhibitions.

[Note--The sound of the cuckoo, the orange-red colour, and fresh shoots of barley--all these are symbolic of life in its most vibrant form. It conjures up a picture of warmth and passions, and represents the natural instinct of a man to seek company of his female partner in order to start the creative process of bringing forth a new life in the form of an offspring, represented by the fresh shoot of barley. The red colour is associated with warmth of love and passion, and the sound of the cuckoo is like the music played by Nature to celebrate this occasion.]

Verse no. 44:

उपचितावयवा शुचिभिः कणैरलिकदम्बकयोगमुपेयुषी।
सदृशकान्तिरक्षयत मञ्जरी तिलकजालकजालकमौक्तिकैः॥ ९-४४

upacitāvayavā śucibhiḥ kaṇairalikadambakayogamupeyuṣī |
sadrśakāntirakṣayata mañjarī tilakajālakajālakamauktikaiḥ || 9-44

9-44. The onlookers saw with admiration the magnificent Parijat tree, with newly sprouting buds from which white, sweet smelling sap oozed, and on which black bees hovered relentlessly in search of nectar, for it resembled a beautiful maiden who had

adorned herself with a latticed veil decorated with pearls that hang from the sides of her temples.

[Note--In this analogy, the Parijat tree is compared to a maiden, the white buds sprouting on its branches to the pearled veil worn by that lady, and the black bees swarming all around the tree to the black hair that draped the sides of the temples of this charming woman.]

Verse no. 45:

ध्वजपटम् मदनस्य धनुर्भृतश्छविकरम् मुखचूर्णमृतुश्रियः।

कुसुमकेसररेणुमलिव्रजाः सपवनोपवनोत्थितमन्वयुः॥ ९-४५

dhvajapaṭam madanasya dhanurbhṛtaśchavikaram mukhacurṇamṛtuśriyaḥ |
kusumakesarareṇumalivrajāḥ sapavanopavanotthitamanvayuḥ || 9-45

9-45. Swarms of black bees ran behind the sweet smelling pollen (of flowers) that was blown by the wind in every direction in the forest. This scene was reminiscent of Kamdeo holding his bow and flag, and marching forward with his army, or the deity of the spring season who had smeared her face with a fragrant, yellowish paste made of pollen.

[Note--In this verse, the bees pursuing pollen are compared to Kamdeo (Cupid), who pursues lovers, and the pollen of the flowers themselves to the arrows shot by him. Another analogy is that of a young maiden who applies a scented yellow paste made of sandalwood on her face, where the sandalwood represents the pollen.]

Verse no. 46:

अनुभवन्नवदोलमृतुत्सवम् पटुरपि प्रियकण्ठजिघृक्षया।

अनयदासनरज्जुपरिग्रहे भुजलताम् जलतामबलाजनः॥ ९-४६

anubhavannavadolamṛtutsavam paṭurapi priyakaṇṭhajighṛkṣayā |
anayadāsanarajjuparigrahe bhujalatām jalatāmabalājanaḥ || 9-46

9-46. During the spring season, young ladies-in-love enjoy riding on swings hanging from branches of trees that also bear colourful flowers in the forest or garden during the 'swing festival'.

Though these damsels are experts in swinging, and are expected to sit on the swing's wooden planks while holding the rope of the swing tight to avoid the risk of falling from the swing during its motion, yet these ladies are so clever that they purposely relax their grip on the rope from which the swing hangs so that they will have an excuse to feign falling down in the hope that their respective partners, who are also sitting on the plank by their side, would immediately intervene to hold their hands and clasp them tightly to their bosom.

[Note--Ordinarily, anyone sitting on the wooden plank of a swing would hold the ropes from which the swing hangs tightly to avoid slipping and falling down when the swing is in full motion. But a lady in love, who has her partner sitting by her side on the plank of the swing, would purposely loosen her grip of the rope and pretend that she is about to lose balance and fall down so that her partner would immediately hold her hand to support her and at the same time tightly embrace so that she does not fall down and hurt herself. This is nothing but a trick employed by the lady-in-love so that her lover would be compelled to hold her hands and embrace her without her explicitly asking him to do so out of modesty and shyness. Her cunning strategy works, and she gets what she desires--i.e. embrace of her partner. Either she would herself hold his hand tightly, feigning imminent fall from the swing, or he would intervene to hold her hand and clasp her tightly to prevent her from falling.]

Verse no. 47:

त्यजत मानमलम् बत विग्रहैर्न पुनरेति गतम् चतुरम् वयः।
परभृताभिरितीव निवेदिते स्मरमते रमते स्म वधुजनः॥ ९-४७

tyajata mānamalam bata vighrahairna punareti gatam caturam vayah |
parabhṛtābhiritīva nivedite smaramate ramate sma vadhujanaḥ || 9-47

9-47. During the charming season of spring when cuckoo sings a lot, it appears that Kamdeo (the deity of love, passion and desire) uses the bird as his spokesperson to convey the following message to young ladies: "Oh fair lady! Leave aside modesty, overcome inhibitions and hesitations, and don't engage in futile arguments and quarrelling. Enjoy life to the full while there is an opportunity, because once the best period of time to enjoy your life goes away, once youth is replaced by old age, then the time gone by and wasted opportunities would never come back to you."

[Note--From a broader perspective, this verse conveys a universal message that is applicable to all--i.e. if we miss an opportunity, and if we fritter away our lives in futile pursuits, then later on there would be no sense in lamenting and regretting, as the time gone by will never come back. So therefore, we must make the best of the time and the opportunities available to us while still there is a chance to do so.]

Verse no. 48:

अथ यथासुखमार्तवमुत्सवम् समनुभुय विलासवतीसखः।
नरपतिश्चकमे मृगयारतिम् स मधुमन्मधुमन्मथसम्निभः॥ ९-४८

atha yathāsukhamārtavamutsavam samanubhuya vilāsavatīsakhah |
narapatiścakame mṛgayāratim sa madhumanmadhumanmathasamnibhaḥ||
9-48

{From verse no. 25 till verse no. 47, we have read an interesting and captivating description of the spring season. Now, from verse no. 48 onwards, the thread of the story related to king Dasrath is once again picked up for narration.}

9-48. King Dasrath, who was equal to Lord Vishnu in valour, strength, courage and bravery, who was as cheerful and lively as the spring season itself, and who was as charming as Kamdeo, after having enjoyed the pleasures of the ongoing spring season in the company of young women¹, decided to go for a hunting expedition.

[Note--¹In ancient times, it was normal for kings and emperors to have courtesans in their royal court who would entertain the king as well as others in the king's entourage. Even Indra, the king of gods, had Apsaras in his heavenly court.]

Verse no. 49:

**परिचयम् चललक्ष्यनिपातने भयरुचोश्च तदिङ्गितबोधनम्।
श्रमजयात्प्रगुणाम् च करोत्यसौ तनुमतोऽनुमतः सचिवैर्ययौ॥ ९-४९**

paricayam calalakṣyanipātane bhayarucośca tadiṅgitabodhanam |
śramajayātpṛaguṇām ca karotyasaṁ tanumato'numataḥ sacivairiyayau || 9-49

9-49. The game of hunting has many practical uses or benefits. First, it trains a person to aim and shoot at a moving target, such as the animal selected to be shot, because the animal would not stand at a place to get killed, but it runs as fast as it can, changing directions continuously to avoid the hunter. Second, it teaches the hunter to get acquainted with the different moods and body-languages of creatures, such as expressions of fear, anger, doubt, stubbornness, retaliation, revenge, wish to surrender, seeking mercy, etc. Third, since hunting is a sport requiring physical stamina and energy, it helps the hunter to tone his body and build endurance. {All these elements stand in good stead for a warrior as they train and prepare him for actual battle-field scenarios.}

So therefore, king Dasrath consulted his ministers and went out for a hunting expedition.

Verse no. 50:

**मृगवनोपगमक्षमवेषभृद्विपुलकण्ठनिषक्तशरासनः।
गगनमश्वखुरोद्धतरेणुभिर्नुसविता स वितानमिवाकरोत्॥ ९-५०**

mṛgavanopagamakṣamaveṣabhṛdvipulakaṇṭhaniṣaktaśarāsanah |
gaganamaśvakhuroddhatareṇubhirṇṣavitā sa vitānamivākarot || 9-50

9-50. Dressing himself in an attire fit for a hunting expedition in deep forest which is full of wild animals, king Dasrath, who was as glorious and looked as remarkable as the sun

in the community of kings, slung his bow across his broad shoulders and rode on his majestic war horse as he headed to the forest. The king rode so fast that a huge cloud of dust was raised by the hooves of his stallion, and it formed a canopy of dust in the sky.

Verse no. 51:

ग्रथितमौलिरसौ वनमालया तरुपलाशसवर्णतनुच्छदः।
तुरगवल्गनचञ्चलकुण्डलो विरुरुचे रुरुचेष्टितभूमिषु॥ ९-५१

grathitamaulirasau vanamālayā tarupalāśasavarṇatanucchadaḥ |
turagavalganacañcalakuṇḍalo viruruce ruruceṣṭitabhumiṣu || 9-51

9-51. Since Dasrath was going to the forest to hunt, he wore a camouflaged attire: his headgear had wild flowers and twigs wrapped around it in the form of a garland, his shield and body-armour had the deep green colour of leaves, the earrings that he wore were swaying as he rode the swift-moving horse, By-and-by, he reached the deep recesses of the wild forest where a species of deer called 'Ruru' frequented.

[Note--The 'Ruru deer' is also known as Mrigu Ruru. It has a golden hide. According to ancient text, the warrior class, known as the Kshatriyas, could use this deer's golden-coloured hide as seats or body covering. Great sages also used the hide during religious rituals. In the modern context, the term refers to the Swamp Deer (Barasingha) or the Chital (Spotted Deer). Refer also to verse no. 72 herein below.]

Verse no. 52:

तनुलताविनिवेशितविग्रहा भ्रमरसम्क्रमितेक्षणवृत्तयः।
ददृशुरध्वनि तम् वनदेवताः सुनयनम् नयनन्दितकोसलम्॥ ९-५२

tanulatāviniveśitavigrahā bhramarasamkramitekṣaṇavṛttayaḥ |
dadṛśuradhvani tam vanadevatāḥ sunayanam nayananditakosalam || 9-52

9-52. The many forest-dwelling deities whose physical bodies were symbolically represented by the creepers, and their eyes by the black bees sitting on these creepers, welcomed king Dasrath, the king of the (north) Kosala kingdom, and they willingly cleared the path for him.

[Note--In this analogy, the creepers are said to be personified forms of forest-deities, and the black bees, sitting on these creepers, their eyes. By saying these deities cleared the path for Dasrath it is meant that the creepers did not obstruct his way, and he could easily navigate his way through them.]

Verse no. 53:

श्वगणिवागुरिकैः प्रथमास्थितम् व्यपगतानलदस्यु विवेश सः।

स्थिरतुरम्गमभूमि निपानवन्मृगवयोगवयोपचितम् वनम्॥ ९-५३

śvagaṇivāgurikaiḥ prathamāsthitaṁ vyapagatānaladasyu viveśa saḥ |
sthiraturamgamabhumi nipānavanmṛgavayogavayopacitaṁ vanam || 9-53

9-53. Finally, king Dasrath reached that part of the forest that was selected by his royal attendants for the purpose of hunting. These servants or attendants had arrived earlier with hunting dogs, and had already spread out nets to trap the deer. There was no fear of fire or thieves here (for the obvious reason that royal servants were already there and had ensured that proper security measures were in place before the arrival of king Dasrath).

The ground was hard, fit for horses to tread upon. There were water tanks near wells so that animals could drink water. And there were abundant antelopes, birds and wild buffaloes all around the place.

[Note--Even a cursory reading of this verse would show that Dasrath had not gone alone to hunt. A large retinue of servants and attendants had either gone before him to prepare the ground for him, or had accompanied him. So there is no wonder that the creepers did not obstruct the path of king Dasrath, and the way was cleared for him, as narrated in previous verse no. 52. From a practical point of view, the path was actually cleared by Dasrath's royal attendants themselves before he personally passed through it.

These hunting expeditions lasted for several days, so all logistical arrangements had to be made, and a large camp would be set up to provide for food, drink, and tents for stay. During the actual process of hunting, the king had the choice of many kinds of game, such as antelopes, wild buffaloes and birds.]

Verse no. 54:

अथ नभस्य इव त्रिदशायुधम् कनकपिङ्गतडिद्गुणसम्युतम्।

धनुरधिज्यमनाधिरुपाददे नरवरो रवरोषितकेसरी॥ ९-५४

atha nabhasya iva tridaśāyudham kanakapiṅgataḍidguṇasamyutam |
dhanuradhijyamanādhirupādade naravaro ravarōṣitakesarī || 9-54

9-54. Presently, Dasrath, who was prominent amongst kings, raised his bow and pulled its string, the twang of which provoked the lions to roar back. At that time, Dasrath resembled Indra (the god of rain), who pulls out his celestial bow represented by the rainbow whose bow-string is represented by the streak of bright yellow-orange coloured lightening.

[Note--The rainbow itself is made of seven colours, viz. red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, with the dominant colours being orange, yellow and green. The streak of lightening is fiery in nature, and as fire has a bright yellow-red colour, it seems that the lightening is the string of the bow. And obviously, the sharp ear-drum splitting thunder

that accompanies the bolt of lightening resembles the twang of the bow used by Dasrath. He twanged the bow to stir the animals from their hiding place so that he can pursue and shoot them as game.]

Verse no. 55:

तस्य स्तनप्रणयिभिर्मुहुरेणशाबैर्व्याहन्य-मानहरिणीगमनम् पुरस्तात्।
आविर्बभुव कुशगर्भमुखम् मृगाणाम् युथम् तदग्रसरगवितकृष्णसारम्॥ ९-५५

tasya stanapraṇayibhirmuhureṇaśābairvyāhanya-mānahariṇīgamanam purastāt |
āvirbabhuva kuśagarbhamukham mṛgāṇām yutham
tadagrasaragarvitakṛṣṇasāram || 9-55

9-55. He (Dasrath) observed that at a distance moved a herd of deer consisting of young fawns, female deer, and a big black antelope who lead the herd from the front. The fawns were walking slowly as they either stopped here and there to nibble at the grass on the ground or suckle their mother's teats for milk. The she deer too had to pause frequently because of the slow pace of their fawns. The big male antelope at the front of the herd seemed to be its leader as he led the group with his head held high; he had a mouthful of grass which he was chewing lazily.

Verse no. 56:

तत्प्रार्थितम् जवनवाजिगतेन राज्ञा तुणीमुखोद्धृतशरेण विशीर्णपङ्क्तिः।
श्यामीचकार वनमाकुलदृष्टिपातैर्वीतेरितोत्पलदलप्रकरैरिवार्द्रैः॥ ९-५६

tatprārthitam javanavājigatena rājñā tuṇīmukhoddhṛtaśareṇa viśīrṇapaṅkti |
śyāmīcakāra vanamākuladrṣṭipātai rvāteritotpaladalaprakarairivārdraiḥ ||9-56

9-56. No sooner had king Dasrath seen this herd of deer and mounted his stallion to pursue it, than the herd dispersed helter-skelter, with stunned and terrified animals scampering away in different directions, with their eyes wide open with the fear of being trapped and killed. This scene was like the case of the gust of strong wind tearing away the petals of lotus flowers and spreading these petals all over the forest.

[Note--The face of the deer is often likened to the lotus flower by poets. So therefore, when the herd of deer ran randomly in different directions when Dasrath pursued them on horse back, the poet likens this sight to a strong gust of wind spreading the petals of the lotus flowers in various directions.]

Verse no. 57:

लक्ष्मीकृतस्य हरिणस्य हरिप्रभावः प्रेक्ष्य स्थिताम् सहचरीम् व्यवधाय देहम्।
आकर्णकृष्टमपि कामितया स धन्वी बाणम् कृपामृदुमनाः प्रतिसम्जहार॥ ९-५७

lakṣyīkṛtasya hariṇasya hariprabhāvaḥ prekṣya sthitām sahacarīm vyavadhāya
deham |
ākarnakṛṣṭamapi kāmītayā sa dhanvī bāṇam kṛpāmr̥dumanāḥ pratisamjahāra ||
9-57

9-57. King Dasrath, who was an expert archer who rivalled Indra, the king of gods, in archery, observed that the antelope he wanted to shoot as game was immediately protected by its female companion who instantly rushed forward to protect the animal from being harmed, as she stood between the king and his target. When Dasrath saw this and concluded how the male deer's companion was ready to sacrifice her own life in order to protect her partner, his heart was overcome with compassion and mercy. Hence, he lowered his arrow, which he had mounted on his bow and was about to shoot by pulling the bow's string far back as his ears, and put it down.

Verse no. 58:

तस्यापरेष्वपि मृगेषु शरान्मुमुक्षोः कर्णान्तमेत्य बिभिदे निबिडोऽपि मुष्टिः।
त्रासातिमात्रचटुलैः स्मरतः सुनेत्रैः प्रौढप्रियानयनविभ्रमचेष्टितानि॥ ९-५८

tasyāpareṣvapi mṛgeṣu śarānmumukṣoḥ karṇāntametya bibhīde nibiḍo'pi muṣṭiḥ
|
trāsātimātracaṭulaiḥ smarataḥ sunetrāiḥ prauḍhapriyānayanavibhramaceṣṭitāni ||
9-58

9-58. When Dasrath mounted his arrow again to target some other deer, he saw fear and a plea for mercy in their terrified eyes. This reminded him of the young ladies of his own court who would look at him with their beautiful eyes filled with terror, pleading for mercy before him and seeking help if some evil person tries to harm them. This thought moved him emotionally so much that he desisted from shooting any of the deer in that herd.

[Note--This verse along with the previous verse no. 57 clearly show that privately king Dasrath was a very kind and merciful person. Hunting and warfare were part of a Kshatriya's life, and even ancient texts endorsed it because they were responsible for providing security and safety to the rest of the people, and to carry on this duty they were duty-bound to fight and slay cruel plunderers, marauders and invaders who acted savagely, and rarely showed mercy and compassion on their victims. Having a hermit or monk like attitude that shuns bloodshed would not help them in carrying out their duties and obligations to the society who depended on them for protection against cruel enemies.]

Verse no. 59:

उत्तस्थुषः सपदि पल्वलपङ्कमध्या न्मुस्ताप्ररोहकवलावयवानुकीर्णम्।
जग्राह स द्रुतवराहकुलस्य मार्गम् सुव्यक्तमार्द्रपदपङ्क्तिभिरायताभिः॥ ९-५९

uttasthuṣaḥ sapadi palvalapaṅkamadhyā nmustāprarohakavalāvayavānukīrṇam |
jagrāha sa drutavarāhakulasya mārgam
suvyaktamārdrapadapaṅktibhirāyatābhiḥ || 9-59

9-59. Leaving those docile deer alone, king Dasrath turned his attention in a different direction where he saw half-chewed bunches of the wild motha grass strewn randomly everywhere. He also saw a long line of wet footprints of wild boar who probably had emerged from the slush of a nearby shallow water body, and then gone in the direction where these footprints led into the forest. {It was also possible, though not explicitly mentioned here, that he had heard in the distance the sound of grunting of wild boars.}

[Note--The motha grass is also known as Nut grass or the Coco-grass; its botanical name is Cyperus rotundus. Its a type of wild weed eaten by wild boar.

So, putting two-and-two together, i.e. seeing the half eaten bunches of motha grass as well as the still wet footprints on the ground, the clever king immediately deduced that a herd of wild boar had gone in the direction where these footprints led deep into the forest.]

Verse no. 60:

तम् वाहनादवनतोत्तरकायमीष दिवध्यन्तमुद्धृतसटाः प्रतिहन्तुमीषुः।
नात्मानमस्य विविदुः सहसा वराहा वृक्षेषु विद्धमिषुभिर्जघनाश्रयेषु॥ ९-६०

tam vāhanādavanatottarakāyamīṣa dvidhyantamuddhṛtasaṭāḥ pratihantumīṣuḥ |
nātmānamasya vividuḥ sahasā varāhā vṛkṣeṣu
viddhamiṣubhirjaghanāśrayeṣu || 9-60

9-60. As soon as king Dasrath, who was riding his horse, bent forward to take aim and shoot arrows at those wild boars, the furious animals turned back, and with the hairs on their necks bristling in excitement, they charged at the king. But Dasrath was too quick for them, as he shot a volley of powerful arrows in such rapid succession that the arrows struck the wild boars with a mighty force and instantly nailed or pinned these animals to the nearest tree trunk even before they could either escape or realise what had happened.

Verse no. 61:

तेनाभिघातरभसस्य विकृष्य पत्री वन्यस्य नेत्रविवरे महिषस्य मुक्तः।
निर्भिद्य विग्रहमशोणितलिप्तपुङ्ख स्तम् पातयाम् प्रथममास पपात पश्चात्॥ ९-६१

tenābhighātarabhasasya vikṛṣya patrī vanyasya netravivare mahiṣasya
muktaḥ |
nirbhidyā vighrahamaṣṇitaliptapuṅkha stam pātayām prathamamāsa
papāta paścāt || 9-61

9-61. Meanwhile, Dasrath saw that a wild buffalo was furiously charging in his direction. The king shot a powerful arrow at the beast. This arrow struck the animal in its eyes, entered its body, and exited from the rear so fast that not a drop of blood had the time to get stuck to the feathered tail end of the arrow. The development unfolded so rapidly that the buffalo dropped down dead even before the arrow exited from its body.

[Note--Such incidents reinforce the reputation of king Dasrath as an expert and skilled archer.]

Verse no. 62:

प्रायो विषाणपरिमोक्षलघूत्तमाङ्गा न्खड्गाम्श्चकार नृपतिर्निशितैः क्षुरप्रैः।
शृङ्गम् स दृप्तविनयाधिकृतः परेषा मृत्युच्छ्रितम् न ममृषे न तु दीर्घमायुः॥ ९-६२

prāyo viṣāṇaparimokṣalaghūttamāṅgā nkhaḍgāmścakāra nṛpatirniśitaiḥ
kṣurapraiḥ |
śṛṅgam sa dr̥ptavinayādhikṛtaḥ pareṣā matyucchritam na mamṛṣe na tu
dīrghamāyuh || 9-62

9-62. Soon after, king Dasrath saw a group of rhinoceros. Using an arrow with a sickle-shaped or horse-shoe blade at its tip, the king chopped off their horns, thereby lightening the burden on their heads.

King Dasrath disliked pride and haughtiness; he did not like anyone walking with a haughty aura around himself before him. So this is why he merely chopped off the horns of these animals because the latter used their horns as a sign of their pride. He spared their lives (i.e. he did not kill these animals outright) because he had no personal rivalry or enmity or grudge with anyone (and also because the rhinoceros did not challenge him or charge at him, so he thought it unwise to kill them for no rhyme or reason).

[Note--We come across three distinctive attributes of Dasrath's character: One, if his opponent was humble, unarmed, polite, submissive, posed no threat to him, and pleaded for mercy, the king would immediately show compassion and mercy to him--as is evident in the case of herds of deer whom the king had left alone although he had first intended to hunt them down. This is narrated in verse nos. 57-58 herein above.

Two, if the opponent became aggressive and attacked him, the king would immediately put him down, and if the need be even kill the adversary to teach others a lesson that they would never forget. This trait is evident in the slaying of the wild boars

and the buffalo as narrated in verse nos. 60 and 61 respectively. There we have read that the wild boars and the wild buffalo had charged menacingly at king Dasrath with intent to attack and kill him, compelling him to punish them by slaying them with his arrows.

Three, if the opponent means no harm to him but still shows signs of aggressiveness, arrogance and haughtiness, or displays symbols of these negative traits as represented by the horns of the rhinoceros, then Dasrath would pull down these signs or symbols but spare the opponent's life itself. This is evident in the case of the rhinos as narrated in the present verse no. 62.]

Verse no. 63:

**व्याघ्रानभीरभिमुखोत्पतितान्गुहाभ्यः फुल्लासनाग्रविटपानिव वायुरुग्णान्।
शिक्षाविशेषलघुहस्ततया निमेषा त्तुणीचकार शरपुरितवक्त्ररन्धान्॥ ९-६३**

vyāghrānabhīrabhimukhotpatitāṅguhābhyaḥ phullāsanāgraviṭapāniva vāyuruṅṇān
|
śikṣāviśeṣalaghuhastatayā nimeṣā ttuṇīcakāra śarapuritavaktrarandhrān
|| 9-63

9-63. When lions were provoked by the loud clamour raised by king Dasrath's attendants, these animals became so angry that they emerged from their dens in the mountain caves and lunged ferociously at Dasrath with the intent to kill him. But Dasrath, who was an expert archer, was too quick for them; with extreme agility and dexterity he shot volleys of sharp arrows at the lions so much so that the open mouth of the animals got stuffed with arrows. At that time, these lions, with their open mouths filled by arrows shot by king Dasrath, gave the impression that many quivers full of arrows were being hurled out of the mouth of the caves. Or as if the flower laden branches of a Asana tree had been blown away by the wind (phullāsanāgraviṭapāniva vāyuruṅṇān).

[Note—¹Both the Lion and the Asana tree look majestic in their habitats. The lion is the king of the forest, and with its thick mane and authoritative demeanours it symbolises power and courage. The lion, especially its head and skin, are used by powerful people as a symbol of authority, power, control and stamina. Similarly, the Asana tree has branches with colourful flowers, mainly of a reddish hue, and its leaves have colourful spots at irregular intervals, as well as prominent veins and capillaries clearly visible on its skin, just like the stripes of a tiger's skin. The 'Asana' tree is called the 'Indian Kino tree'. It is a medium to large deciduous tree that can grow to 30 meters in height. Its botanical name is 'Terminalia alata', and in the colloquial language of northern India it is called 'Bijasal or Saaj tree'. This tree has medicinal value in traditional Indian system of medicine, and is used as an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial agent.

Both the lion and the asana tree look majestic in their respective habitats or kingdoms, i.e. in the animal and the plant kingdoms respectively.

When king Dasrath shot quick arrows, the latter filled the open mouths of the lions as they continued to dash forward for some more time before they fell down dead under their own weight. Similarly, the flower laden branches of the asana tree would be

blown by a strong storm for some distance before they fall down owing to their own weight.]

Verse no. 64:

**निर्घातोयैः कुञ्जलीनाञ्जिघाम्सुर्ज्यानिर्घोषैः क्षोभयामास सिम्हान्।
नूनम् तेषामभ्यसुयापरोऽभुद्वीर्योदग्रे राजशब्दो मृगेषु॥ ९-६४**

nirghātogrāiḥ kuñjalīnāñjighāmsurjyānirghoṣaiḥ kṣobhayāmāsa simhān |
nunam teṣāmaḥsuyāparo'bhudvīryodagre rājaśabdo mṛgeṣu || 9-64

9-64. In order to make those lions who were still hiding or concealed behind the cover of dense trees and creepers of the forest to emerge from their hiding places and come out in the open, king Dasrath made a loud twang by pulling the strings of his bow. This thunderous sound became intolerable for these lions who became very uneasy. King Dasrath had become enraged when some of the lions had emerged from their dens to attack him (as narrated in verse no. 63 herein above), so he could not tolerate that any one of their community (i.e. any lion) would remain behind unpunished to challenge him and his authority later on. {So therefore, those lions who had gone into hiding were instigated to show up before Dasrath and face their fate.}

Verse no. 65:

**तान्हत्वा गजकुलबद्धतीव्रवैरान्काकुत्स्थः कुटिलनखाग्रलग्नमुक्तान्।
आत्मानम् रणकृतकर्मणाम् गजानामानृण्यम् गतमिव मार्गणैरममस्त॥ ९-६५**

tānhatvā gajakulabaddhatīvravairāṅkākutsthaḥ kuṭīlanakhāgralagnamuktān |
ātmānam raṇakṛtakarmaṇām gajānāmānṛṇyam gatamiva mārgaṇairamamsta|| 9-65

9-65. {This verse explains why king Dasrath was so interested in eliminating the lions.}

In earlier times, elephants had served king Dasrath in his army and played pivotal roles in his victories in many wars. So therefore, the king felt indebted to the community of elephants and wanted to repay them for their selfless services to him by eliminating their inveterate and natural enemies, the lions. These lions were furious enemies of the elephants, and they would attack the latter from behind and kill them. Some of these lions had torn garlands of pearls that hung around the necks of the elephants they killed still entangled in the nails of their paws.

[Note--Great kings nurtured elephants and looked after these animals well as they were very useful to the king during wars. There were two kinds of elephants--one were those who were under the care of the king's army, and the others were wild elephants of the forest. To distinguish the tamed elephants from the untamed elephants, a garland was usually put around the tamed animal's neck. King Dasrath was regularly informed that

some of these elephants had been killed in the forest by the lions. So he had decided that one day, he would teach the lions a bitter lesson. That opportunity came during his hunting expedition when he scooped out all the lions and killed them to avenge the killing of his army's tamed elephants.]

Verse no. 66:

चमरान्परितः प्रवर्तिताश्वः क्वचिदाकर्णविकृष्टभल्लवर्षी।

नृपतीनिव तान्वियोज्य सद्यः सितबालव्यजनैर्जगाम शान्तिम्॥ ९-६६

camarānparitaḥ pravartitāśvaḥ kvacidākarnavikṛṣṭabhallavarṣī |
nṛpatīniva tānviyojya sadyaḥ sitabālavyaajanairjagāma śāntim || 9-66

9-66. Proceeding further in the forest in search of game, king Dasrath encountered a herd of deer who had hairy or bushy tails. No sooner had these deer seen the king, than they stood on their tracks, stared at the king, and raised their tails and waved them. Dasrath took this raising of the tail as a sign of defiance and challenge to him, and therefore he took out his spears, pulled his hand back as far as his ear, and then threw a volley of spears at these deer with such perfection that their raised tails were severed but the animals weren't killed.

[Note--The deer referred to here is called the 'white-tailed deer'. The animal has a white hairy or bushy tail which looks like a flag from a distance. The tail is brownish at the top and white underneath. The deer would raise it and wave it when in danger, to alert other members of the herd of the impending danger. This tail is also raised when the deer runs, exposing its white underside as a waving flag. Its zoological name is 'Odocoileus virginianus'.

King Dasrath likened this raising of the tail and waving it before him as symbol of defiance in the same way as an army of his opponent king would raise its banners to challenge him.

Another interpretation is that king Dasrath was an 'emperor', and he did not like any other king showing off his regal status by waving his own flag or ceremonial royal whisk in front of him. So, when he saw the deer raising their white hairy tails and waving them before him, he immediately linked this incident to a situation where a group of kings get together and raise their own flags and ceremonial whisks as a show of resistance or defiance or challenge to his overriding authority as the emperor of the realm. This annoyed him, and so he cut-off the tails as a symbolic gesture to trounce the arrogance and the sense of pride of his adversary, but spared their lives as he never wanted to shed blood just for the fun of it.]

Verse no. 67:

अपि तुरगसमीपादुत्पतन्तम् मयुरम् न स रुचिरकलापम् बाणलक्ष्यीचकार।

सपदि गतमनस्कश्चित्रमाल्यानुकीर्णं रतिविगलितबन्धे केशपाशे प्रियायाः॥ ९-६७

api turagasamīpādutpatantam mayuram na sa rucirakalāpam bāṇalakṣyīcakāra |
sapadi gatamanaskaścitraṁālyānukīrṇe rativigalitabandhe keśapāśe priyāyāḥ ||
9-67

9-67. It often happened that peacocks would fly around his horse with their colourful plumes spread in a wide arch, but the king never thought of hurting them by shooting his arrows at them. It is because the playful birds reminded him of cheerful young women, adorned with colourful flowers, who move around playfully when they are excited and are in the vicinity of their lovers.

[Note--When young damsels are near young lads, or vice versa, they start behaving oddly to attract the attention of the opposite sex, whether they are in love with each other or not. This is a natural instinct that Mother Nature has built into all living beings. King Dasrath was a very realistic and an understanding person, and he would not want to disturb this natural process of procreation put in place by the Creator. The male peacock, known as the peafowl, opens its colourful plumes and dances to attract the attention of a female peacock, known as the peahen. So the king did not want to disturb these harmless birds during their courtship period.]

Verse no. 68:

तस्य कर्कशविहारसम्भवम् स्वेदमाननविलग्नजालकम्।
आचचाम सतुषारशीकरो भिन्नपल्लवपुटो वनानिलः॥ ९-६८

tasya karkaśavihārasambhavam svedamānanavilagnajālakam |
ācacāma satuṣāraśīkaro bhinnapallavapuṭo vanānilaḥ || 9-68

9-68. The sweat drops that appeared on the face of king Dasrath due to the exertion of hunting, was dried by the soft breeze blowing in the forest. The breeze was cooled by water droplets collected from the damp environment of the shady forest, and besides giving comfort to the king by wiping away his sweat, it also opened the leaves of the trees by providing moisture to them.

Verse no. 69:

इति विस्मृतान्यकरणीयमात्मनः सचिवावलम्बितधुरम् धराधिपम्।
परिवृद्धरागमनुबन्धसेवया मृगया जहार चतुरेव कामिनी॥ ९-६९

iti vismṛtānyakaraṇīyamātmanāḥ sacivāvalambitadhuram dharādhīpam |
parivṛddharāgamanubandhasevayā mṛgayā jahāra catureva kāmīnī || 9-69

9-69. In this way, leaving the administration of the kingdom in the hands of his ministers, king Dasrath came to the forest and got so engrossed in, and obsessed by, the game of hunting that he forgot all about his other obligations and responsibilities. It appeared that

the game of hunting had possessed him, and kept him under its hypnotic spell, making him neglect everything else. It was like the case of a young lady, who is very faithful and sincere in serving her husband, casting such a magical spell on him that he becomes dependent on her and obsessed by her thoughts so much that he forgets about everything else, and always thinks of how to keep her happy and satisfied.

[Note--Here, the charm of the lady is likened to the attraction of the game of hunting which obsessed Dasrath. He became engrossed in this pastime, neglecting his other duties pertaining to the kingdom.

Credit must be given to the poet Kalidas that he has been frank and outright enough to point out this fault in Dasrath's character. Instead of glossing over it, he has expressly stressed this point that he neglected his other more important duties and responsibilities as the king of a mighty kingdom, leaving all its affairs in the hands of his ministers, which he should have handled himself, and which risked putting the reins of the kingdom and the welfare of its citizens in the hands of handful of ministers who could mishandle situations, or even misuse their position, to cause long-term harm or damage to the reputation of the kingdom and the king himself--just for the sake of the game of hunting!]

Verse no. 70:

**स ललितकुसुमप्रवालशय्याम् ज्वलितमहौषधिदीपिकासनाथाम्।
नरपतिरतिवाहयाम्बभुव क्वचिदसमेतपरिच्छदस्त्रियामाम्॥ ९-७०**

sa lalitakusumapравālaśayyām jvalitamahauṣadhidīpikāsanāthām |
narapatirativāhayāmbabhuva kvacidasametaparicchadastrīyāmām || 9-70

9-70. King Dasrath became so obsessed with the game of hunting that he set aside all protocol and forgot about his status as a king who should take special care about his security in an unknown and alien place, such as the wild forest infested by dangerous animals and life-threatening situations. As he pursued games, he ventured alone in the remote parts of the forest, leaving his companions behind. He would sleep on the ground on a make-shift bed of leaves which he made himself by plucking leaves, and treated the phosphorescent herbs found in deep forests as lamps during the darkness of the night.

[Note--Obviously, this was a very dangerous proposition. Any wild animal could have attacked him in his sleep; poisonous snakes and insects could have bitten him; he might even lose his way and find himself lost and trapped. But Dasrath was so bold, fearless and courageous that such situations did not bother him, as he was confident that he would tackle all of them himself, and that he needed no one's help.

Verse no. 71:

उषसि स गजयुथकर्णतालैः पटुपटहध्वनिभिर्विनीतनिद्रः।

अरमत मधुराणि तत्र शृण्वन्विहगविकुजितवन्दिमङ्गलानि॥ ९-७१

uṣasi sa gajayuthakarnātālaiḥ paṭupaṭahadhvanibhirvinītanidraḥ |
aramata madhurāṇi tatra śṛṇvanvihagavikujitavandimaṅgalāni || 9-71

9-71. In spite of living in the forest, Dasrath showed all the characteristics of a king. For instance, like he was accustomed to hearing the sound of drums that woke him up in the morning, the loud noise of elephants flapping their ears woke him up in the morning in the forest. Similarly, like he was accustomed to be entertained by the songs of royal bards and minstrels, the sweet song of the birds of the forest provided entertainment to him.

Verse no. 72:

अथ जातु रुरोर्गृहीतवर्त्मा विपिने पार्श्वचरैरलक्ष्यमाणः।

श्रमफेनमुचा तपस्विगाढाम् तमसाम् प्राप नदीम् तुरम्गमेण॥ ९-७२

atha jātu rurorgrhītavartmā vipine pārśvacarairalakṣyamāṇaḥ |
śramaphenamucā tapasvigāḍhām tamasām prāpa nadīm turamgameṇa ||
9-72

9-72. One day, while pursuing the 'ruru deer'¹, king Dasrath got detached from his entourage, and ventured alone in the depth of the forest. He got tired, and his stallion began frothing from its mouth due to exhaustion. By-and-by, the king reached that part of the forest that bordered the Tamsa river, where ascetics and hermits living in distant hermitages used to come to take their bath.

[Note--¹The 'ruru deer': refer verse no. 51 herein above for details.]

Verse no. 73:

कुम्भपुरणभवः पटुरुच्चैरुच्चचार निनदोऽम्भसि तस्याः।

तत्र स दिवरदबृम्हितशङ्की शब्दपातिनमिषुम् विससर्ज॥ ९-७३

kumbhapuraṇabhavaḥ paṭuruccairuccacāra ninado'mbhasi tasyāḥ |
tatra sa divradabr̥mhitasaṅkī śabdapātinamiṣum visasarja || 9-73

9-73. At that time, a young hermit (named Srawan Kumar) had gone to the river to fill a pot of water for his blind parents who were waiting at a distant. When he was filling the pot with water, a sound mimicking the gurgling of water by elephants came from it. From a distance, king Dasrath mistook it for a wild elephant drinking water from the river. So he shot an arrow in that direction. This arrow had the special quality that it honed itself to lock onto the target which produced the sound and hit it with precision (much like

modern-day missiles that use technology to cruise through the air and hit the target with precision).

Verse no. 74:

**नृपतेः प्रतिषिद्धमेव तत्कृतवान्पङ्क्तिरथो विलङ्घ्य यत्।
अपथे पदमर्पयन्ति हि श्रुतवन्तोऽपि रजोनिमीलिताः॥ ९-७४**

nr̥pateḥ pratiṣiddhameva tatkr̥tavānpaṅktiratho viraṅghya yat |
apathe padamarpayanti hi śrutavanto'pi rajonimīlitāḥ || 9-74

9-74. A noble king is not supposed or expected to kill an elephant except on the battle-field. So what king Dasrath did in this instant was wrong. It often happens that even the wisest of men commit some grave error or an unpardonable deed when they are influenced by delusions or are under the spell of Raja Guna (which makes them forget the difference between what is good and what is not, and they begin to think that no one can challenge their decisions, or that they can do whatever they want without the fear of punishment or repercussions).

[Note--King Dasrath had committed a big mistake by aiming to kill an elephant outside of the battle-field. And therefore he deserved punishment for his misdeed or misadventure. How it unfolded is narrated now. This and the verses that follow remind us of the sacrosanct principle of Dharma that no matter how great a man is, no matter how high a position he holds, his deeds determine his fate. This doctrine will be proved by the fate of Dasrath.

There are three types of Gunas or qualities in a person--viz. Sata Guna, Raja Guna, and Tama Guna. The first type is the best, the last one is the worst, while the middle one is somewhere in between these two extremes. There are no distinct lines to demarcate or differentiate these Gunas, but the general idea is that good is always good, and bad is always bad. How to distinguish between them often depends upon the person doing a deed, the circumstances or the context around the deed, and the intent as well as the awareness in the person regarding whether what is being done is right or wrong. Feigning ignorance is not an excuse. Actions and deeds have their consequences, and this is the underlying principle of the theory of Karma; no one is above it--what you sow, you reap!

In this case, being a wise and intelligent king, Dasrath was well aware of the principle that a king is not supposed to kill an elephant outside a battle-field. He could not feign ignorance of this principle. But, as has been stressed earlier too, he had become so obsessed by the game of hunting that he forgot everything else. That is why he shot an arrow to kill this imaginary elephant.]

Verse no. 75:

हा तातेति क्रन्दितमाकर्ण्य विषण्ण स्तस्यान्विष्यन्वेतसगुढम् प्रभवम् सः।
शल्यप्रोतम् प्रेक्ष्य सकुम्भम् मुनिपुत्रम् तापादन्तःशल्य इवासीत्क्षितिपोऽपि॥ ९-७५

hā tāteti kranditamākarnya viṣaṇṇa stasyānviṣyanvetasaguḍham
prabhavam saḥ |
śalyaprotam prekṣya sakumbham muniputram tāpādantaḥśalya
ivāsītkṣitipo'pi || 9-75

9-75. Dasrath heard a human voice exclaiming 'Oh father'. As soon as he heard it, he was filled with remorse and immediately deduced that something was seriously wrong, and rushed in the direction from where the voice originated. Clearing his way through thickets of cane, Dasrath reached the spot and saw a young son of a sage (muniputram) bent over a water pot with an arrow stuck in his chest. Stunned and full of grief beyond description, the king felt that the arrow had slammed into his own chest and had got stuck there. {But obviously, it was now too late.}

Verse no. 76:

तेनावतीर्य तुरगात्प्रथितान्वयेन पृष्ठान्वयः स जलकुम्भनिषण्णदेहः।
तस्मै दिवजेतरतपस्विसुतम् स्खलद्भि रात्मानमक्षरपदैः कथयाम्बभुव॥ ९-७६

tenāvatīrya turagātpṛathitānvayena pṛṣṭānvayaḥ sa
jalakumbhaniṣaṇṇadehaḥ |
tasmai dvijetaratapasvisutam skhaladbhi rātmānamakṣarapadaiḥ
kathayāmbabhuva || 9-76

9-76. King Dasrath was always conscientious about never committing a sinful deed that would be beyond redemption. When he saw the young boy dressed in ochre clothes, like that of a monk, he was extremely alarmed, fearing that he has shot a Brahmin boy. To know the fact, he politely approached the wounded boy and asked who he was.

The boy instinctively understood Dasrath's intention, and so he briefly replied that he was a son of a Vaishya father and a Shudra mother¹. The king heaved a sigh of relief that at least his victim was not a Brahmin.

{But nevertheless, killing an innocent person for no rhyme or reason, especially one who lives the life of a monk, is as unpardonable and heinous a crime as killing a Brahmin. This thought shook Dasrath's heart from its very core, and weighed heavily on his conscience.}

[Note--¹The Hindu society has been classified into four classes since ancient times. These four classes are Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The Vaishya community principally deals in trade, commerce and farming, while the Shudra, the lowest in the rung, is the class meant to serve the other three classes. The Brahmin occupies the highest rung, and are primarily teachers, priests and moral advisors. The Kshatriyas are the warrior class responsible to give protection the society as a whole.]

Verse no. 77:

तच्चोदितः स तमनुद्धृतशल्यमेव पित्रोः सकाशमवसन्नदृशोर्निनाय।

ताभ्याम् तथागतमुपेत्य तमेकपुत्र मञ्ज्यानतः स्वचरितम् नृपतिः शशम्स ॥ ९-७७

taccoditaḥ sa tamanuddhṛtaśalyameva pitroḥ sakāśamavasannadr̥śornināya |
tābhyām tathāgatamupetya tamekaputra majñyānataḥ svacaritam nṛpatiḥ
śaśamsa || 9-77

9-78. The dying boy pleaded with king Dasrath to take him to his blind parents who were waiting at some distance for him to bring water. The king lifted the dying boy and took him to his parents, and then he told them all that had happened, expressing deep regret that he had inadvertently killed their only son by shooting an arrow at him (in the mistaken belief that the sound produced by the filling of his water pot was the gargling sound of a wild elephant).

Verse no. 78:

तौ दम्पती बहु विलप्य शिशोः प्रहर्त्रा शल्यम् निखातमुदहारयतामुरस्तः।

सोऽभूत्परासुरथ भुमिपतिम् शशाप हस्तार्पितैर्नयनवारिभिरेव वृद्धः ॥ ९-७८

tau dampatī bahu vilapya śiśoḥ prahartrā śalyam
nikhātamudahārayatāmurastaḥ |
so'bhūtparāsuratha bhumipatim śaśāpa
hastārpitairnayanavāribhireva vṛddhaḥ || 9-78

9-78. The old couple, the parents of the hermit-boy, was devastated; they lamented and grieved inconsolably. However, recovering momentarily, they asked the king to remove the arrow that was still stuck in the boy's chest. No sooner the king removed that arrow, than the boy died. Then the elderly father collected his tears in his cupped palms and cursed king Dasrath as follows--

Verse no. 79:

दिष्टान्तमाप्स्यति भवानपि पुत्रशोका दन्त्ये वयस्यहमिवेति तमुक्तवन्तम्।

आक्रान्तपुर्वमिव मुक्तविषम् भुजम्गम् प्रोवाच कोसलपतिः प्रथमापराद्धः ॥ ९-७९

diṣṭāntamāpsyati bhavānapi putraśokā dantye vayasyahamiveti tamuktavantam |
ākrāntapurvamiva muktaviṣam bhujamgam provāca kosalapatiḥ
prathamāparāddhaḥ || 9-79

9-79. The sobbing and grieving father cursed king Dasrath, saying: "Oh king! I curse you that you too will die of grief in your old age due to separation from your beloved son."

Just like a cobra that spits its venom by biting a person who had crushed it underfoot, the elderly hermit fell silent after casting his curse.

Then, king Dasrath, who had committed such a horrendous crime for the first time in his life, said to the aged hermit (the father of the dead boy) as follows--

Verse no. 80:

शापोऽप्यदृष्टतनयाननपद्मशोभे सानुग्रहो भगवता मयि पातितोऽयम्।

कृष्याम् दहन्नपि खलु क्षितिमिन्धनेद्धो बीजप्ररोहजननीम् ज्वलनः करोति॥ ९-८०

śāpo'pyadrṣṭatanayānanapadmaśobhe sānugraho bhagavatā mayi
pātito'yam |
kṛṣyām dahannapi khalu kṣitimindhaneddho bījaprarohajanānīm
jvalanaḥ karoti || 9-80

9-80. Dasrath said: "On sage! I have not been fortunate enough to have a son till now. So I regard this curse of yours as a blessing in disguise because now at least I will have a son. {To wit, to make your curse effective, I must first have a son, and then only can it be that I die due to grief of separation from him in my old age!}

Just like the fire element which burns everything that comes in contact with it, such as grass, fuel etc, but at the same time is also essential for providing energy and heat to the earth so that sown seeds can produce crops, so likewise your curse is a sort of boon for me as now I am certain that I will have a son whom I would love very much."

[Note--Here, the hermit's curse, like the fire, was scorching for Dasrath. But at the same time, it ensured that he would finally beget a son to make the curse effective. The curse says 'You will die in your old age grieving for your son', but how can that happen unless the king has a son, because till that point of time he had no offspring or heir.

Hence, the king took this curse as a favour rather than a blight on him.]

Verse no. 81:

इत्थम् गते गतघृणः किमयम् विधत्ताम् वध्यस्तवेत्यभिहितो वसुधाधिपेन।

एधान्हुताशनवतः स मुनिर्ययाचे पुत्रम् परासुमनुगन्तुमनाः सदारः॥ ९-८१

ittham gate gataghṛṇaḥ kimayam vidhattām vadhyastavetyabhihito
vasudhādhipeṇa |
edhānhutāśanavataḥ sa muniryayāce putram parāsumanugantumanaḥ sadāraḥ
|| 9-81

9-81. The king said further: "Oh hermit! Truly speaking, the crime I have committed, though inadvertently, is serious enough to allow you to kill me as punishment. Now, please tell me what your instructions for me are, what am I to do for you now."

Hearing this polite submission of Dasrath, the old hermit replied: "Now I and my wife wish to die along our son. So now you must arrange for a funeral pyre for the three of us. {Since I am blind, this is why I am asking you to do this for us.}"

[Note--Unknowingly, this request gave king Dasrath a chance to somewhat reduce the gravity of his sin, a sort of commutation of his punishment, because to perform the last rites of a person with due dignity and respect is a form of repentance. Usually, a son performs the last rites of a person, so therefore, since Dasrath had sincerely regretted the killing of the hermit's son, Fate maneuvered things in such a clever way that the king assumed the role of the hermit's son by default, and played the role of both a son vis-à-vis the parents, and a brother vis-à-vis their dead son.]

Verse no. 82:

**प्राप्तानुगः सपदि शासनमस्य राजा सम्पाद्य पातकविलुप्तधृतिर्निवृत्तः।
अन्तर्निविष्टपदमात्मविनाशहेतुम् शापम् दधज्ज्वलनमौर्वमिवाम्बुराशिः॥ ९-८२**

prāptānugaḥ sapadi śāsanamasya rājā sampādya
pātakaviluptadhṛtirnivṛttaḥ |
antarniviṣṭapadamātmavināśahetum śāpam dadhajjvalanamaurvamivāmburāśiḥ
|| 9-82

9-82. In the meantime, the attendants of king Dasrath arrived at that place. Firewood and other items needed for a funeral pyre were soon arranged, and the last rites of the two aged parents and their son were done. {As directed by the old hermit, Dasrath performed the rituals himself.}

Then, with a heavy heart and a conscience full of guilt of having committed a grave crime, along with a lurking fear of the consequences of the curse that would one day prove devastating for him, king Dasrath returned home.

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवम्श महाकाव्ये नवमः सर्गः

iti kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṃśa mahākāvyē navamaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 9th canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Chapter 2

Raghuvansham of Kalidas

The Life and Time of Lord Ram--The Story of the Ramayana

Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 10, verse nos. 1-86:

Introduction

King Dasrath (also spelled as Dashrath or Dashratha) of Ayodhya, the father of Lord Ram, had spent about ten-thousand years ruling his kingdom, yet he had no son. He was worried about his future, so he was advised by his court priest, sage Vashistha, to organise a son-begetting fire-sacrifice under the guidance of the renowned sage Sringeri Rishi. {The spelling of the king's name varies--viz. in Sanskrit texts it is Dashrath or Dashratha, while in Hindi texts such as Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, it is spelled as Dasrath.}

In the meantime, the demons had taken birth and their chief was Ravana and his three brothers, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan. Ravana had done severe penance to please the creator Brahma, and when the creator granted him boon of invincibility, unmatched power and victory over all the creatures, he became emboldened enough to run amok in this world. He unleashed a reign of terror and mayhem all around, not even sparing the gods.

Tormented and worried, the gods, along with mother earth who represented all creatures of this world, approached Lord Vishnu, the second of the Trinity Gods and the protector, sustainer and caretaker of this creation, to save them from Ravana's horrors. On their prayer, Lord Vishnu promised them that he would come down to earth in the form of a human being known as Lord Ram since it was not possible to kill Ravana in his role as a 'God' due to Brahma's boon of immunity to Ravana which said that the latter won't be killed by the gods. But Brahma had told Ravana at that time that this is a mortal world, and though he was being granted immunity from death at the hands of the mighty and the powerful, yet he must make certain exceptions so as to obey the laws of Nature and creation. On this condition laid by Brahma, Ravana thought that humans and monkeys would be no match against him if he becomes so powerful that even the gods fear him. So therefore, he told Brahma that if it is absolutely necessary to make some exception to the general immunity from death, then he would opt for human being and monkeys who could kill him in a battle if they ever can muster courage to face him and fight with him.

Hence, Lord Vishnu told the assembled gods and mother earth that he would exploit this loophole to slay Ravana in the form of a human being with the help of monkeys. The gods and mother earth were pleased, and they left feeling happy.

In the meantime, king Dashrath's (also spelled as Dashrath or Dashratha) fire-sacrifice was successful and the fire god emerged with a pot of a divine potion which he gave Dashrath to be distributed amongst his wives. The cheerful king gave half of this blessed potion to his eldest queen Kaushalya and the other half to the next queen Kaikeyi. These two queens then divided their own share into two equal halves, and then each gave

this one half to their partner queen Sumitra. This method of distribution is endorsed in Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 10-12.

Thus, in due course of time, all the three queens gave birth to four lovely sons. Kaushalya gave birth to Lord Ram, Kaikeyi to Bharat, and Sumitra to the twins Laxman and Shatrughan.

At the time of their birth, the royal crown jewels over Ravana's head slipped and fell down to the earth to give an ominous warning to the demon king that his nemesis has taken birth.

All birth rituals and ceremonies were duly held with pomp and pageant. As time passed, the four brothers grew up and were sent to sage Vashistha for their education.

This part of this magnificent story has also been narrated in Tulsidas' epic version of the Ramayana that is known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 204.

With this background information, now let us commence with our reading of the main text of Raghuvansham's Canto 10 as follows:

{Note--The verses have been numbered in the following sequence: canto number followed by verse number. For instance, the first verse is numbered "10-1", meaning canto no. 10, verse no. 1. This pattern is followed throughout Raghuvansham.}

Verse no. 1:

पृथिवीम् शासतस्तस्य पाकशासनतेजसः।

किञ्चिद्गमनमूर्द्धः शरदामयुतम् ययौ॥ १०-१

pr̥thivīm śāsatastasya pākaśāsanatejasaḥ ।

kimcidūnamanūnarddheḥ śaradāmayutam yayau || 10-1

10-1. King Dashrath was a famous and powerful ruler of the kingdom of Ayodhya. He was equal to Indra, the king of gods of heaven, in grandeur, might, radiance and affluence. No less than ten thousand years passed by as he ruled this earth.

Verse no. 2:

न चोपलेभे पूर्वेषामृणनिर्मोक्षसाधनम्।

सुताभिधानम् स ज्योतिः सद्यः शोकतमोपहम्॥ १०-२

na copalebhe pūrveṣāmr̥ṇanirmokṣasāadhanam ।

sutābhidhānam sa jyotiḥ sadyaḥ śokatamopaham || 10-2

10-2. It was so unfortunate that inspite of his glorious life and adherence to Dharma, he could not yet find that symbolic 'light' called a 'son' that would dispel his gloom of

worries and sorrows pertaining to the future of his family, inheritance of the throne of the kingdom, and the means of obtaining freedom from the debt due to his ancestors.

[Note--King Dashrath remained childless even after ten thousand years of ruling this world. He was worried as to who would inherit his legacy and who would perform his last rites when he died. He had three chief queens, yet none could bear him a son. These thoughts made Dashrath very sad and worried. In Hinduism it is believed that a son is able to help his ancestors find freedom from the cycle of birth and death by performing certain rituals and making charities for this purpose. It is called 'Pitra Daan'.]

Verse no. 3:

अतिष्ठत्प्रत्ययापेक्षसम्वत्तिः स चिरम् नृपः।

प्राङ्मन्थादनभिव्यक्तरत्नोत्पत्तिरिवार्णवः॥ १०-३

atiṣṭhatpratyayāpekṣasamvattiḥ sa ciram nṛpaḥ।

prāṇmanthādanabhivyaktaratnotpattirivārṇavaḥ || 10-3

10-3. Just as the precious gems of the ocean were not obtained by the gods in some ancient time until efforts were made by churning the ocean, so was also the case with king Dashrath. In his destiny it was indeed provided that he would have sons, but he had to make an effort for it; there was the need for an action that would produce a result in the way of him having sons.

[Note--If the ocean was not churned, it wouldn't have produced anything. Right effort has to be made to attain success in anything. Sons would not drop down from the sky without making some effort to have them. In ancient times, religious activity dominated all spheres of life. If one wished to have some wish fulfilled, he would consult his priest and perform some ritual so that the desired objective was obtained as a blessing. One such universally approved ritual was the performance of a fire-sacrifice. Dashrath finally did one to fulfil his wish to get sons as will be narrated herein below.]

Verse no. 4:

ऋष्यशृङ्गादयस्तस्य सन्तः सन्तानकाङ्क्षिणः।

आरेभिरे जितात्मानः पुत्रीयामिष्टिमृत्विजः॥ १०-४

ṛṣyaśṛṅgādayastasya santaḥ santānakāṅkṣiṇaḥ।

ārebhire jitātmānaḥ putriyāmiṣṭimṛtvijaḥ || 10-4

10-4. Then, great sages led by Sringi (who was an expert in this particular field) were summoned. They started the performance of a son-begetting fire-sacrifice (on behalf of their patron, king Dashrath).

[Note--Even in our modern age, a person would consult and engage some professional for helping him do certain work requiring expertise. In medical field too, there are many professional branches. In the present context, sage Sringi was an expert in performance of a fire-sacrifice that would produce a positive result to fulfil the patron's desire to have an offspring. This fire-sacrifice was called 'putra-kaamesthi' yagya.]

Verse no. 5:

**तस्मिन्नवसरे देवाः पौलस्त्योपप्लुता हरिम्।
अभिजग्मुर्निदाघार्ताश्छायावृक्षमिवाध्वगाः॥ १०-५**

tasminnavasare devāḥ paulastyopaplutā harim।
abhijagmurnidāghārtāśchāyāvṛkṣamivādhvagāḥ || 10-5

10-5. Meanwhile, almost at the same point of time, the gods, who were immensely suffering from the horrors and oppression unleashed by the demon king Ravana, went to seek succour from Lord Vishnu in the same way as a harried traveller seeks the shelter of a tree when he is tormented by the scorching heat of the sun.

[Note--A harried traveller goes to take shelter under the cooling shade of a tree when the scorching sun makes him feel oppressed and restless. Similarly, the horrors of Ravana left the gods so terrified that they had no other option but to seek protection from Lord Vishnu who is the protector and caretaker of this creation, and is the second God of the Trinity.]

Verse no. 6:

**ते च प्रापुरदन्वन्तम् बुबुधे चादिपूरुषः।
अव्याक्षेपो भविष्यन्त्याः कार्यसिद्धेर्हि लक्षणम्॥ १०-६**

te ca prāpurudanvantam bubudhe cādipūruṣaḥ।
avyākṣepo bhaviṣyantyāḥ kāryasiddherhi lakṣaṇam || 10-6

10-6. No sooner did the assembly of gods reached the celestial ocean of milk where Lord Vishnu was present, than the Lord woke up from his deep-sleep state of consciousness, called the 'Yoga Nidra'. This was an auspicious sign for the gods because if there is no delay or hindrance while getting started on a job, then its success is certain; it is a sign of accomplishment of the enterprise.

[Note--Lord Vishnu reclines on the coiled body of Seshnath, the legendary celestial serpent, as it floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk. The Yoga Nidra is the deep-sleep state of consciousness usually practiced by great ascetics. During this sleep, the ascetic remains oblivious of the surroundings while resting in blissful state of

meditation. As soon as the gods arrived, Lord Vishnu opened his eyes. It is because the Lord is all-knowing, and he was quietly aware that he has gods as his guests.]

Verse no. 7:

भोगिभोगासनासीनम् ददृशुस्तम् दिवौकसः।

तत्फणामण्डलोदचिर्मणिद्योतितविग्रहम्॥ १०-७

bhogibhogāsanāsīnam dadṛśustam divaukaṣaḥ।

tatphaṇāmaṇḍalodarcirmaṇidyotitavigrahaṁ || 10-7

10-7. The gods saw that Lord Vishnu was reclining comfortably on the coiled body of the celestial serpent called Seshnath. The jewels on the hoods of this serpent shone brilliantly and shed their glow on the inherently radiant body of Lord Vishnu, making the Lord's body all the more illuminated.

Verse no. 8:

श्रियः पद्मनिषण्णायाः क्षौमान्तरितमेखले।

अङ्के निक्षिप्तचरणमास्तीर्णकरपल्लवे॥ १०-८

śriyaḥ padmaṇiṣaṇṇāyāḥ kṣaumāntaritamekhale।

aṅke nikṣiptacaraṇamāstīrṇakarapallave || 10-8

10-8. When the gods approached Lord Vishnu, they beheld he was reclining comfortably on the couch formed by the coiled body of the celestial serpent, with his legs lying on the lap of goddess Laxmi, Lord Vishnu's consort. She was seated on a magnificent lotus flower and was softly massaging the feet of the Lord with her soft lotus-leaf like palms. In order to ensure that the metal of her waistband did not hurt Lord Vishnu's feet, she had covered that ornament with a layer of her sari (a long piece of seamless cloth wrapped around the body of a Hindu lady which she wears as her body-covering garment). To further ensure that the Lord's feet did not feel the even the slightest touch of the waistband's metal, she cupped the feet of the Lord with the lotus-like palm of one of her hands and used the other hand to softly massage the legs.

Verse no. 9:

प्रबुद्धपुण्डरीकाक्षम् बालातपनिभाम्शुकम्।

दिवसम् शारदमिव प्रारम्भसुखदर्शनम्॥ १०-९

prabuddhapuṇḍarikākṣam bālātapanibhāmsukam।

divasam śāradamiva prārambhasukhadarśanam || 10-9

10-9. The gods saw the divine and blissful form of Lord Vishnu whose eyes resembled fully grown white lotuses, whose Pitambar (the name of the garment worn by Lord Vishnu) had a shining golden hue like that of the radiant sunshine during the morning hours on a clear day after sunrise, whose sight was so charming that it reminded one of the clear day of the autumn season, and whose august presence gave immense bliss and delight to sages and saints.

Verse no. 10:

प्रभानुलिप्तश्रीवत्सम् लक्ष्मीविभ्रमदर्पणम्।

कौस्तुभाख्यमपाम् सारम् बिभ्राणम् बृहतोरसा॥ १०-१०

prabhānuliptaśrīvatsam lakṣmīvibhramadarpaṇam।

kaustubhākhyamapām sāram bibhṛaṇam bṛhatorasā || 10-10

10-10. The broad chest of Lord Vishnu was adorned by a magnificent jewel known as Kaustav Mani (which was obtained during the ancient churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons). It had a wonderful shine and glittered brilliantly. It was so large that often times, goddess Laxmi would see her face on its polished surface at the time of adorning herself (like a lady uses a mirror to see her face while grooming herself). The reflected light radiating out from the Kaustav Mani even illuminated the footmark of sage Bhrigu that was present on the Lord's chest¹.

[Note--¹Sage Bhrigu's footprint on the chest of Lord Vishnu: Sage Bhrigu is a well known sage and seer who appears in a number of Vedic and Purnaic works. His name 'Bhrigu' is derived from the root word 'Bhrij' or 'Bhraaj' which literally means to roast or burn, and therefore it could mean the sage, who was a fire sacrifice priest, had some mystical powers which allowed him to kindle the altar fire automatically by use of Mantras. According to mythological history, the patron God of lightening, Lord Maatarishwan, brought the celestial lightening down to earth and taught three priests the art of kindling the sacred altar fire using the Aranis ('the fire sticks' used to kindle fire by vigorous rubbing together). These three priests were the Bhrigu, the Angiras, and the Atharvan.

Sage Bhrigu is regarded as being one of the nine 'Manas Putras' of Brahma, the creator. [That is, Bhrigu was born as the son of Brahma because the latter wished in his mind and heart, the 'Mana', to have a son, a 'Putra', rather than the usual process by which a son is born, i.e. the physical process of procreation by intercourse.]

He is one of the seven celestial sages known as "Sapta-rishis".

He once tested the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and determined that Vishnu is the best amongst them and alone deserves worship. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapuran, Skandha 10, Chapter 89, and in brief it is as follows—

Once all the sages had collected and decided to judge which of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, is the greatest. Sage Bhrigu was appointed to find it out. Bhrigu first went to Brahma and did not show any respect to him. This enraged Brahma, but somehow he managed to control himself.

Then Bhrigu went to meet Shiva. Shiva came forward but Bhrigu did not want to meet him, accusing the Lord of following inauspicious way of life. This enraged Shiva who lifted his trident to kill Bhrigu. Then Parvati, the consort of Shiva, intervened and pacified him.

Finally, Bhrigu went to Vishnu who was reclining in his divine abode known as Vaikuntha. Bhrigu got annoyed that Vishnu did not get up to welcome him, and so he kicked the Lord on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep, and instead of becoming angry at Bhrigu asked for his forgiveness as he was unaware that the Brahmin has arrived as he was asleep. Further, Vishnu showed Bhrigu great respect and said that instead of feeling insulted on being kicked on the chest, he is feeling honoured that a great sage had blessed him by touching his body with his august feet. This stunned Bhrigu; he was dumbfounded at the gracious and forgiving nature of Vishnu. But Vishnu's consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was extremely peeved, and she cursed the Brahmin that henceforth the entire Brahmin race will have to suffer because of lack of wealth and would be forced to beg for their sustenance.

Lord Vishnu wears the mark made by the sage's footprint on his chest as a token of respect that he has for learned Brahmins.

Bhrigu came back and narrated the entire thing to the assembly of sages. They decided that indeed it was Lord Vishnu who was the greatest because he had conquered anger, the worst of all the negative qualities and the cause of all strife and destruction. Anger was to become the greatest of evils and vices in this world, and forgiveness as the greatest of virtues.]

Verse no. 11:

बहुभिर्विटपाकारैर्दिव्याभरणभूषितैः।

आविर्भूतमपाम् मध्ये पारिजातमिवापरम्॥ १०-११

bahubhirviṭapākārairdivyābharaṇabhūṣitaiḥ।

āvirbhūtamapām madhye pārijātamivāparam || 10-11

10-11. Lord Vishnu was adorned by divine jewels and had long arms that resembled long branches of a tree. This gave the impression to the beholder that a large Kalpa Tree (the evergreen tree of the heaven that has a mystical power to fulfil all wishes) had grown up in the ocean

Verse no. 12:

दैत्यस्त्रीगण्डलेखानाम् मदरागविलोपिभिः।

हेतिभिश्चेतनावद्भिरुदीरितजयस्वनम्॥ १०-१२

daityastrīgaṇḍalekhānām madarāgavilopibhiḥ।

hetibhiścetanāvadbhirudīritajayasvanam || 10-12

10-12. When the gods arrived to meet Lord Vishnu, they saw that the Lord's weapons, which had earlier eliminated the evil demons and thereby trounced the pride and haughtiness of their wives (who thought that their husbands were invincible), had assumed a visible form and were singing laurels in praise of the Lord. These weapons were Chakra (serrated discus), Gada (mace) etc. (the others being a bow and a sword, as well as the conch that the Lord used to blow to mark his victory over evil forces).

Verse no. 13:

मुक्तशेषविरोधेन कुलिशव्रणलक्ष्मणा।

उपस्थितम् प्राञ्जलिना विनीतेन गरुत्मता॥ १०-१३

muktaśeṣavirodhena kuliśavraṇalakṣmaṇā।

upasthitam prāñjalīnā vinītena garutmatā || 10-13

10-13. Garud (the celestial Eagle which is the mount of Lord Vishnu) had abandoned his animosity with the celestial Serpent¹ (the Seshnath on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu was reclining), and who still bore the mark of injury that he sustained earlier when Indra, the king of gods, had caused by hitting him with his thunderbolt², now stood before Lord Vishnu very humbly, with palms of his hands joined in a prayerful mode, and ever ready to serve the Lord.

[Note--¹Sage Kashyap had two wives, Kadru and Vinata. Kadru was the mother of serpents known as the Nagas led by Seshnath, and Vinata of the birds led by Garud. Once Kadru tricked Vinata and made the latter her slave. In order to free his mother from this curse, Garud struck a deal with the Nagas who demanded that if he brings some Amrit (an elixir of immortality) from Indra, the king of the gods, so that they could drink it, then they would tell their mother Kadru to release Vinata from slavery to her.

Garud fought with the gods led by their king Indra to snatch the pitcher containing Amrit from them. When he came back, he tricked the Nagas by saying that they must first purify themselves by performing rituals to become eligible to drink it. Meanwhile, he gave Amrit to his mother and other Birds. When Vinata drank a drop of Amrit, she was freed from the curse of slavery. But this denial of Amrit to the Nagas made Garud and Nagas eternal enemies. This also ensured that Garud always gave protection to those who worship him against the danger of evil forces represented by the serpents and demons who lurk in the darkness and attack on the sly.

²It was during this fight with the gods to get the needed Amrit that Garud was injured by Indra's thunderbolt. When Indra observed that Garud was flying away with the pitcher containing Amrit, he threw his Vajra (thunderbolt) to stop him, but Garud did not bother. The strike of the thunderbolt, however, left an injury mark on Garud's body.

Meanwhile, after his main objective of freeing his mother from slavery was accomplished, Garud gave the remaining part of Amrit back to Indra, thereby befriend him once again.]

Verse no. 14:

योगनिद्रान्तविशदैः पावनैरवलोकनैः।

भृगवादीननुगृहणन्तम् सौखशायनिकानृषीन्॥ १०-१४

yoganidrāntaviśadaiḥ pāvanairavalokanaiḥ।

bhṛgvādīnanugṛhṇantam saukhaśāyanikānṛṣīn || 10-14

10-14. Lord Vishnu woke up from his Yoga Nidra (deep sleep state of consciousness; a state obtained during meditation when one seems to be sleeping blissfully)¹ and looked refreshed and calm. He saw great sages such as Bhrigu and others standing before him (alongside the gods) and prayerfully making enquiries about his well-being.

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 6 herein above.]

Verse no. 15:

प्रणिपत्य सुरास्तस्मै शमयित्रे सुरद्विषाम्।

अथैनम् तुष्टुवुः स्तुत्यमवाङ्मनसगोचरम्॥ १०-१५

praṇipatya surāstasmai śamayitre suradvīṣām।

athainam tuṣṭuvuḥ stutyamavāṅmanasagocaram || 10-15

10-15. Then the gods began offering prayers in honour of Lord Vishnu who is an eliminator of Asurs (non-gods or the demons), who is worthy of praise and offering of obeisance, and who is beyond the comprehension and reach of the mind, the faculty of speech and other faculties of the gross body. {He cannot be understood by the mind in entirety, cannot be described, cannot be seen, cannot be felt and cannot be comprehended by any of the organs of the gross body.}

Verse no. 16:

नमो विश्वसृजे पूर्वम् विश्वम् तदनु बिभ्रते।

अथ विश्वस्य सम्हर्त्रे तुभ्यम् त्रेधास्थितात्मने॥ १०-१६

namo viśvasṛje pūrvam viśvam tadanu bibhrate।

atha viśvasya samhartre tubhyam tredhāsthitātmane || 10-16

10-16. The assembled gods said: "Oh Lord! Playing different roles, it is actually you who had first created this world, then it is you who protect it, and in the end it is you who would bring this creation to its end. Thus you are the Supreme Being. We bow before you.

[Note--The Supreme Being takes on three roles--first as the Creator known as Brahma, he initiates the process of creation; then as Vishnu he protects this creation, and finally as Shiva he brings this creation to an end.]

Verse no. 17:

रसान्तराण्येकरसम् यथा दिव्यम् पयोऽश्नुते।

देशे देशे गुणेष्वेवमवस्थास्त्वमविक्रियः॥ १०-१७

rasāntarāṇyekarasam yathā divyam payo'snute।

deśe deśe guṇeṣvevamavasthāstvamavikriyaḥ || 10-17

10-17. Just as the rain water from the sky has a uniform taste and colour in its original form whenever it is tasted, yet it acquires different hues of taste and colour when it falls on the ground and gets involved or mixed with other sources of water (such as the rivers, seas, lakes, well etc. found in different regions of the world), or takes other shapes (such as when present in sap in different kinds of plants, or as juice of different fruits and vegetables, or anything else that has a liquid form)--so in like manner the same Lord (i.e. the Supreme Being), though being uniform and immutable, assumes different characters and qualities when he plays different roles in this creation (as the creator, the protector and the concluder of creation).

[Note--The idea is that though the Supreme Being remains unchanged and uniform in all respects, but he has to adopt certain characters and qualities that fits in with the role he has to play as the creator Brahma, as the protector Vishnu, and as the concluder Shiva. Essentially it is the same cosmic Consciousness that is present in all these three gods of the Trinity, but from the outside they appear to have distinct forms and characters.

For example, Brahma is depicted as a god with four heads and four arms, he looks old like a family patriarch, and besides his role of creation he is also said to be wise and a repository of knowledge as it is he who pronounced the Vedas. Whenever gods need advice, they go to him. Brahma is the first god of the Trinity who is responsible for creation.

Lord Shiva is depicted in the form of an ascetic, smeared with ash, wearing a garland of serpents around his neck, holding a trident and playing the damaru (a small hour-glass shaped playing drum with small pellets attached at both ends which strike the two broader ends to produce a sound when the damaru is shaken rapidly left and right in a semicircular motion). Shiva is the third god of the Trinity who is responsible for conclusion of the creation at the end of its life.

Lord Vishnu is the protector and caretaker god. He has four hands holding a mace, a conch, a discus and sword. Since he takes care of this world, he is very benevolent, magnanimous, understanding, practical, kind and polite. In his role as the protector of the world, he is deemed to be most respectable, honourable and sought after of the three gods. Vishnu is the second god of the Trinity.

By assigning the term 'Supreme Being' to universally mean Lord Vishnu, it is implied that the job of giving protection and providing for sustenance of all living beings in this world is a very important and commendable job, more than merely producing and ending anything, thereby making Lord Vishnu a virtual 'king' of creation as a king also plays a similar role with regards to the subjects of his kingdom.

This is also why there are said to be three types of qualities or virtues in this world--viz. Sata Guna, Raja Guna, and Tama Guna. Lord Brahma has dominance of Sata Guna, Vishnu of Raja Guna, and Shiva of Tama Guna. The Supreme Being, on the other hand, is neutral as all these three gunas, though present in him, neutralise each other.]

Verse no. 18:

अमेयो मितलोकस्त्वमनर्थी प्रार्थनावहः।

अजितो जिष्णुरत्यन्तमव्यक्तो व्यक्तकारणम्॥ १०-१८

ameyo mitalokastvamanarthī prārthanāvahah।

ajito jiṣṇuratyantamavyakto vyaktakāraṇam || 10-18

10-18. Oh Lord! You are immeasurable, infinite and incomprehensible yourself, but you can measure and comprehend the world (as it has been created by you). You are yourself without any desire and don't have any kind of wish, but you fulfil the desires and wishes of all others (as you are the one who fulfils the needs of all living beings in this creation). You are invincible yourself, but you have conquered everything and everyone in the world (such as death that spares no one). And though you are extremely sublime, subtle and imperceptible yourself (in your primary form of pure cosmic Consciousness), yet you are the cause of everything that is perceptible in this material world (which is gross).

Verse no. 19:

हृदयस्थमनासन्नमकामम् त्वाम् तपस्विनम्।

दयालुमनघस्पृष्टम् पुराणमजरम् विदुः॥ १०-१९

hṛdayasthamanāsannamakāmam tvām tapasvinam।

dayālumanaghaspṛṣṭam purāṇamajaram viduḥ || 10-19

10-19. Oh Lord! Great sages and ascetics, who are self-realised and enlightened, understand that you dwell in their hearts, yet they consider you inaccessible because you seem to be so far away from them because they find it very difficult to see you and establish communication with you. They also know that you are selfless and without any desires. They realise that though you are compassionate, yet you maintain calmness and equanimity, remaining unruffled and unaffected by grief and sorrows. And similarly, they are also aware that though you are the eldest Being in creation, yet you are beyond decay and death (i.e. you never age and never die).

Verse no. 20:

सर्वज्ञस्त्वमविज्ञातः सर्वयोनिस्त्वमात्मभूः।

सर्वप्रभुरनीशस्त्वमेकस्त्वम् सर्वरूपभाक्॥ १०-२०

sarvajñastvamavijñātaḥ sarvayonistvamātmabhūḥ।

sarvaprabhuraniśastvamekastvam sarvarūpabhāk || 10-20

10-20. Oh Lord! Since you are omniscient and all-knowing, you know everything and everybody in existence, yet you remain unknown and unintelligible for others. You are the cause of everything coming into being or happening, but you yourself have no cause or reason of being present or doing anything that you do. You are the unquestioned Lord of everyone, but no one is your superior or lord. And though you are one, uniform and immutable, yet you assume myriad of forms with countless features in this world (because everything in this world is only a manifested form of your own self, and none have an existence that is devoid of you at its core).

Verse no. 21:

सप्तसामोपगीतम् त्वाम् सप्तार्णवजलेशयम्।

सप्तार्चिमुखमाचख्युः सप्तलोकैकसम्श्रयम्॥ १०-२१

saptasāmopagītam tvām saptārṇavajaleśayam।

saptārcimukhamācakhyaḥ saptalokaikasamśrayam || 10-21

10-21. Oh Lord! Those who are knowledgeable, wise and learned as well as well-versed in the scriptures, assert that you are the Lord who is the object of praise and worship by the seven types of hymns of the Sama Veda¹ when it is recited by scholars, that you are the Lord who reclines on the surface of the seven seas (or are the patron god of these seven seas)², that the seven types of flames of fire represent your mouth and tongue (i.e. you represent the fire god with its seven types of flames that symbolise its seven tongues)³, and that you are the only support and caretaker of the seven worlds⁴.

[Note--¹The Sama Veda is meant to be sung. Its hymns are not chanted but sung to a set pattern of musical tunes called the 'seven swars' or the seven kinds of sounds produced by classical singers using their vocal chords. These seven types of hymns each using a particular type of tune are the following: Gaayatra, Rathantara, Vaamdevya, Braihatsmaan, Vairupa, Vairaja, and Shakvari.

²The seven seas are the following: Lavana (salty sea), Ikshu (sea of sugarcane juice; sweet and honey-like that symbolises richness and abundance), Suraa (wine-like sweet and intoxicating water), Sarpis (that which is infested by sea-serpents), Dadhi (sea that has the surface resembling curd; frothy white and thick, sour and pungent), Kshira (ocean

of milk; the celestial ocean), and Jala-sagar (terrestrial sea filled with water, such as large lakes and pure water reservoirs).

From a practical modern point of view, these seven seas are the following: Arctic, North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian and the South sea or the Antarctica. The term 'seven seas' may also imply a grouping of some of these other seas: the Red sea, the Mediterranean sea, the Black sea, the Arabian sea, the Persian gulf, the Gulf of Mexico, the South China sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Straits of Malacca, the Singapore straits, the Gulf of Thailand, the Adriatic sea, the Caribbean sea, and the Aegean sea.

The simple idea is that since water is a life-sustaining liquid, Lord Vishnu, as the life-sustaining force of creation, is present imperceptibly in all sources and forms of water.

³The seven tongues of fire are known as Karaali (violent and scorching), Dhumini (surrounded by a cloud of smoke; smoky), Shevta (whitish and bluish flames), Lohita (with a red hue), Nila-lohita (a mixture of blue and red flames), Suvana (golden coloured flames of a brightly light fire), and Padma-raaga (of the soft colour of a lotus flower). During fire sacrifices, all these colours of the fire are noticeable.

⁴The seven worlds are the following: Bhu-loka, Bhuvā-loka, Svā-loka, Mahā-loka, Janā-loka, Tapa-loka, and Satya-loka.

It is visualised that the creation is not flat but a large spherical ball with seven concentric layers or circles of existential life. All life exists within this parameter. The Bhu-loka is at the center, and the Satya-loka at the outer edge, with all the other lokas or worlds lying in between these two. This is very much a scientific world view of the ancient sages as they knew that the earth was not flat but a sphere, and the different layers of its atmosphere are also therefore circular in nature as they surround the earth at varying distances from its center.]

Verse no. 22:

चतुर्वर्गफलम् ज्ञानम् कालावस्थाश्चतुर्युगाः।

चतुर्वर्णमयो लोकस्त्वत्तः सर्वम् चतुर्मुखात्॥ १०-२२

caturvargaphalam jñānam kālāvasthāścaturyugāḥ।

caturvarṇamayo lokastvattaḥ sarvam caturmukhāt || 10-22

10-22. Oh Lord! All knowledge that lead to the attainment of the four fruits of life¹, as well as being informed about all the four periods of time that form the four yugas or eras², and all the four Varnas (classes) of human existence³--verily indeed, all such knowledge emanate from you and revealed by your four mouths in your manifestation as the creator Brahma (who has four mouths and had pronounced all the laws that govern this world).

[Note--¹The four fruits or rewards of living a righteous way of life are the following: Artha (financial prosperity), Dharma (living a life in accordance with the tenets of Dharma which in turn have countless blessings), Kaam (fulfilment of all desires), and Mukti and Moksha (liberation and deliverance of the soul, its final emancipation and salvation from the cycle of transmigration).

²The four eras are the following: Sata Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga, and the Kali Yuga respectively.

The Sata Yuga was the best of the four eras when Dharma was in its prime and fire sacrifices and vedic rituals were part of life.

In the second era, the era of the birth of Lord Ram, Dharma was still there, but it retained only three-fourth of its glory symbolised by the word 'treta', meaning three-fourth.

The third era was when Dharma retained only a half of its former glory, and it was the era when Lord Krishna was born and the Mahabharat war was fought. The word 'dwapar' itself means 'a half' or 'only two parts of the whole'.

The fourth and the current era is called Kali Yuga marked by darkness and decline of Dharma. The word 'Kali' means 'dark'.

Each era has its characteristic features, and a wise man knows them by the grace of Lord Vishnu.

³The four Varnas are the four segments in which the society was divided for proper governance and maintaining law and order amongst its members. These four Varnas are: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. The job of the Brahmin was to teach and act as guides and advisors to the rest of the society. The Kshatriyas were mandated to give protection to the society by acting as kings and warriors. The Vaishyas looked after commerce and trade, and provided the necessities of life. And the main job of the Shudras was to serve the rest of the society so that its other members are freed from daily mundane tasks, and focus their energy and attention instead on the task assigned to them as outlined herein above.]

Verse no. 23:

अभ्यासनिगृहीतेन मनसा हृदयाश्रयम्।

ज्योतिर्मयम् विचिन्वन्ति योगिनस्त्वाम् विमुक्तये॥ १०-२३

abhyāsanigrhītena manasā hṛdayāśrayam।

jyotirmayam vicinvanti yoginastvām vimuktaye || 10-23

10-23. Oh Lord! Great sages and ascetics who are learned and self-restrained, practice deep meditation in order to seek emancipation and they yearn to attain your holy feet, though you live in their own hearts in the form of consciousness and knowledge (yet they can't see you).

[Note--Refer to verse no. 19 in this context.]

Verse no. 24:

अजस्य गृह्णतो जन्म निरीहस्य हतद्विषः।
स्वपतो जागरूकस्य याथार्थ्यम् वेद कस्तव॥ १०-२४

ajasya gr̥hṇato janma nirīhasya hatadvīṣaḥ।
svapato jāgarūkasya yāthārthyam veda kastava || 10-24

10-24. Oh Lord! Though you have no birth, yet you have manifested yourself in some or other corporeal form (such as a fish, a boar, a tortoise etc. to protect this earth whenever it faced some kind of danger)¹. Though you have no animosity with anyone as all are equal for you, yet you have intervened and eliminated the evil forces represented by the demons as if they were your personal enemies (because these demons had been tormenting humble creatures who depend upon you for survival and protection). Again, though you recline in a blissful state of Yoga Nidra (meditative deep sleep), yet you always remain awake and alert.

Verily indeed, you are so mystical and incomprehensible that it is not possible for anyone to know the truth about you in its entirety.

[Note--¹These are some of the non-human forms of Lord Vishnu that he took to salvage the earth from doom.

(i) The Fish incarnation of Vishnu—In this incarnation as a Fish or Matsya, which is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah's Arc.

(ii) The Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu—It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

(iii) The Boar incarnation of Vishnu—It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the ocean where it had vanished. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagvad Mahapurāṇa, Book III, Chapter 13, 18 and 19. In brief it is as follows:

In the beginning of creation, Lord Brahma, the creator, produced Manu and Satrupa, the first male and female. The couple asked the creator to tell them what they are expected to do, at which Brahma told them to start the process of procreation and spread their off-springs on the ground, thereby propagating the human race. Manu was left flummoxed as he did not see any land to carry out his mandate. It was because the demon Hiranyaaksha had hidden it under water of the celestial ocean (or in the void of the nether world ruled by the demons).

Finding no land to stand upon and start the process of procreation, Manu complained to Brahma; the latter meditated and discovered the reason for the earth's disappearance. Brahma then appealed to Lord Vishnu, the 'sustainer and protector of this

creation, and the second god of the Trinity'. Immediately, a Vishnu manifested himself as a tiny 'Boar', the size of a thumb, which grew in size to assume a phenomenal dimension. The Boar dug up the earth from where it was concealed, held it secure on its tusks and revealed it for Brahma.

Meanwhile, when the demon Hiranyaaksha came to know of it, he faced Lord Boar with his gigantic mace and challenged the latter for a duel. In the battle that followed, Lord Vishnu, disguised as a Boar, slayed the demon and finally set the earth free from his clutches.

An interesting development played out in the meantime. The rescued earth itself needed somewhere to be kept. It was like a huge 'ball'. So, the Boar placed it on the surface of the celestial ocean from underneath of which it was rescued, and by his mystical powers made it float on it like a buoy. This is why the land mass of the earth seems to be surrounded by water from all sides.

This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.]

Verse no. 25:

शब्दादीन्विषयान्भोक्तुम् चरितुम् दुश्चरम् तपः।

पर्याप्तोऽसि प्रजाः पातुमौदासीन्येन वर्तितुम्॥ १०-२५

śabdādīnviṣayānbhoktum caritum duścaram tapaḥ।

paryāpto'si prajāḥ pātumaudāsīnyena vartitum || 10-25

10-25. Oh Lord! It is you who manifests yourself in various forms to carry out different functions and enjoy various sensory pleasures pertaining to touch, sound, form, taste and smell (that are related to the sense organs of skin, ear, eye, mouth and nose respectively).

For instance, it is you who revealed himself (as Lord Krishna) and enjoyed these worldly enjoyments. Again, it is you who revealed himself (as Nara-Narayan) to do severe Tapa {i.e. penance and austerity}. It is indeed you who had revealed himself (as Lord Ram) to become a king and take care of the subjects of your realm. And similarly, it is you who had revealed himself (as Gautam Buddha) to preach peace, tranquillity, simplicity and forgiveness as well as renunciation and dispassion by the example of your own life (as Buddha who had diligently practiced these virtues).

{Therefore, you have set an example of how an ascetic should live and also how an ordinary person should live. Both can remain detached from the world while still living in the midst of sensory pleasures.}

Verse no. 26:

बहुधाप्यागमैर्भिन्नाः पन्थानः सिद्धिहेतवः।

त्वय्येव निपतन्त्योघा जाह्नवीया इवार्णवे॥ १०-२६

bahudhāpyāgamairbhinnāḥ panthānaḥ siddhihetavaḥ।

tvayyeva nipatanttyoghā jāhnavīyā ivārṇave || 10-26

10-26. Oh Lord! Just as all the different branches of river Ganges and other great rivers (of India) ultimately fall in the same body of water known as the 'ocean', so do all the different scriptures and religious treatises that lay down principles of spiritual philosophy which teach a person the way and the mean of attaining the ultimate fruit of existence in this world in the form of doctrines that describe how liberation and deliverance from the literally endless cycle of birth and death can be achieved--verily indeed, all of them talk about you and point to you as the ultimate or the final destination of the soul where it can find eternal peace and rest, albeit they do so in different languages and in different contexts.

{To wit, all the scriptures and religious texts point to you when they talk about the fruit of all righteous endeavours undertaken by a person in this world in an effort to find eternal peace and rest for one's soul. All efforts finally lead to you; all religious endeavours culminate in the soul attaining your holy feet; all spiritual philosophies teach how the soul can attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation by following the path that leads to you in your form as the Supreme Being representing the Cosmic Supreme Consciousness.}

Verse no. 27:

त्वय्यावेशितचित्तानाम् त्वत्समर्पितकर्मणाम्।

गतिस्त्वम् वीतरागाणामभूयःसम्निवृत्तये॥ १०-२७

tvayyāveśitacittānām tvatsamarpitakarmaṇām।

gativam vītarāgāṇāmabhūyaḥsamnivṛttaye || 10-27

10-27. Oh Lord! You grant deliverance from the cycle of transmigration to those ascetics and devotees who are free from the negative traits of having attachments and jealousy (i.e. those who practice the virtues of equanimity, dispassion, tolerance, patience and neutrality), as well as those who always meditate upon you, and who offer the fruits of all their endeavours to you.

Such people become eligible to receive your blessings in the form of freedom from being tied to the endless cycle of birth and death, because you grant their souls salvation and emancipation.

Verse no. 28:

प्रत्यक्षोऽप्यपरिच्छेदो मह्यादिर्महिमा तव।

आप्तवागनुमानाभ्याम् साध्यम् त्वाम् प्रति का कथा॥ १०-२८

pratyakṣo'pyaparicchedyo mahyādirmahimā tava।

āptavāganumānābhyām sādhyam tvām prati kā kathā || 10-28

10-28. Oh Lord! Your greatness and glories cannot be measured and known even by seeing those things that are visible and demonstrated in this creation, such as the earth, the sky and the planets with their vastness and multifarious mysteries, which are all created and governed by you, and in all of which you reside in a very subtle form, then say how can one measure or know about you and your eternal, cosmic glory, greatness and form by relying merely on words that are heard from the scriptures or those words that are written by poets and bards?

{Verily indeed, your majestic presence is beyond comprehension, and any attempt to measure you or fathom your glories and understand your greatness is like attempting to measure the depth of the sky using an ordinary measuring tape. If such great physical things of this creation as the earth, the sky and the planets, which a person sees, feels and witnesses first hand, are insufficient to tell anything about your true greatness, then say how can abstract words describe you?}

[Note--The vastness and the multifarious mysteries of the earth, the sky and the planets cannot be fully known by anyone. And all these entities, along with many others such as those existing in countless other universes and worlds, are all created by you. When one cannot fully grasp the secrets of these entities which have a definitive shape and quality, which are distinctly seen and felt, how is it possible then to know and understand about the creator who has crafted countless such entities as a pastime by merely reading or hearing the words of scriptures or those written by poets that attempt to describe the glories and the majesty of the Supreme Being? Obviously, the 'creator' has abilities and qualifications beyond our understanding to have enabled him to give into effect this vast canvas of unimaginable varieties, dimension and characteristics.]

Verse no. 29:

केवलम् स्मरणेनैव पुनासि पुरुषम् यतः।

अनेन वृत्तयः शेषा निवेदितफलास्त्वयि॥ १०-२९

kevalam smaraṇenaiva punāsi puruṣam yataḥ।

anena vṛttayaḥ śeṣā niveditaphalāstvayi || 10-29

10-29. Oh Lord! When those who merely remember you in their thoughts are given deliverance and happiness, then one can imagine the immensity of rewards that we would get (and have become eligible to get) when we have been fortunate to see you in a physical form reclining on a couch of the coiled body of Seshnath, and are able to speak and interact with you.

{By extension, any individual who is fortunate to see your physical form in this world, to speak to you, touch you and interact with you at a personal level, then no one can measure the rewards that accrue to that person. Hence, oh Lord, if you become gracious and benevolent enough to manifest yourself in this world with a physical body like other human beings, then countless devotees of yours would benefit from it.}

Verse no. 30:

उदधेरिव रत्नानि तेजाम्सीव विवस्वतः।

स्तुतिभ्यो व्यतिरिच्यन्ते दूराणि चरितानि ते॥ १०-३०

udadheriva ratnāni tejāmsīva vivasvataḥ।

stutibhyo vyatiricyante dūrāṇi caritāni te || 10-30

10-30. Oh Lord! Just as no one can count the jewels of the ocean or the rays of sunlight, so likewise no one can ever count or measure your virtues and characters that you depict in the myriad forms in which you exist in this creation at a subtle and sublime level.

{Oh Lord! You are all-pervading and all-encompassing in this creation, and there is no place where you are not present in some form or the other. And since this creation is so vast and multifarious in nature, it follows that it is impossible to understand what your specific virtues, qualities and characters are. That is why the Vedas speak of you as being 'Neti-Neti', i.e. not this nor that. In other words, whatever is said of you and your glories is just a fraction of the entirety, and it is not even like scratching the surface to know what lies underneath it.}

Verse no. 31:

अनवाप्तमवाप्तव्यम् न ते किञ्चन विद्यते।

लोकानुग्रह एवैको हेतुस्ते जन्मकर्मणोः॥ १०-३१

anavāptamavāptavyam na te kiñcana vidyate।

lokānugraha evaiko hetuste janmakarmaṇoḥ || 10-31

10-31. Oh Lord! There is nothing in this world to acquire which you are required to take a birth, for everything is within your reach without even making any effort to acquire or attain it. But still, you manifest yourself with a physical body in this world and do so many deeds simply because you wish to bless the world and its creatures by your presence amidst them, giving the latter an opportunity to have undiluted joy and enjoy the pleasure of spiritual bliss by the virtue of being physically near to you.

{To wit, doing good to the creatures of this world, to provide them with an opportunity to attain spiritual happiness, and to bless your devotees with your divine presence amongst them--these are some of the reasons why you manifest yourself in this world and do so many deeds that they could record and recount for generations to come,

thereby benefiting not only the generation which interacts with you, but countless future generations as well.}

Verse no. 32:

महिमानम् यदुत्कीर्त्य तव सम्ह्रियते वचः।

श्रमेण तदशक्त्या वा न गुणानामियत्तया॥ १०-३२

mahimānam yadutkīrtya tava samhriyate vacaḥ।

śrameṇa tadaśaktyā vā na guṇānāmiyattayā || 10-32

10-32. Oh Lord! Now that we would become silent after having said whatever we could regarding your majesty's glories according to our limited knowledge and abilities, it does not mean that it sufficiently describes you or your glories and virtues, for, as we have already asserted, you and your glories are endless, and it is not possible to recall and narrate them fully.

Whatever we have said in your praise is like scratching the surface of something that has an immensity of dimension. We now decide to become silent as we feel helpless and exhausted while recounting your glories and mystical virtues any further as they are limitless as well as beyond our comprehension and abilities to recount."

Verse no. 33:

इति प्रसादयामासुस्ते सुरास्तमधोक्षजम्।

भूतार्थव्याहृतिः सा हि न स्तुतिः परमेष्ठिनः॥ १०-३३

iti prasādayāmāsuste surāstamadhokṣajam।

bhūtārthavyāhṛtiḥ sā hi na stutiḥ parameṣṭhinaḥ || 10-33

10-33. In this way, the gods were able to please Lord Vishnu by sincerely praying to him and honouring him with praises. The fact is that these prayers and honours were not flattery to please Lord Vishnu, but were actually a recapitulation of some of the countless glories and virtues of the Lord. Indeed, they were statements of fact, and no false or imaginary grandiose words meant to satisfy Lord Vishnu's ego.

Verse no. 34:

तस्मै कुशलसम्प्रश्नव्यञ्जितप्रीतये सुराः।

भयमप्रलयोद्वेलादाचख्युर्नैरृतोदधेः॥ १०-३४

tasmai kuśalasampraśnavyañjitapṛitaye surāḥ।

bhayamapralayodvelādācakhryurnairṛtodadheḥ || 10-34

10-34. Lord Vishnu felt happy and asked the assembled gods about their well-being. To his enquiry, the gods replied that many cruel demons have taken birth in this world who have unleashed a reign of terror and mayhem that has been causing immense suffering to everyone in this world, and their actions have brought about a situation that is no less horrifying and dangerous than the actual arrival of the doomsday. All rules of good conduct have vanished, and no order remains in this world.

Verse no. 35:

अथ वेलासमासन्नशैलरन्धानुवादिना।

स्वरेणोवाच भगवान् परिभूतार्णवध्वनिः॥ १०-३५

atha velāsamāsaṇṇaśailarandhrānuvādinā।

svareṇovāca bhagavān paribhūtārṇavadhvaniḥ || 10-35

10-35. Then Lord Vishnu replied to the gods in a deep, grave and resounding voice which resembled the rumble of the ocean, and echoed through the mountains and caves that surrounded it.

Verse no. 36:

पुराणस्य कवेस्तस्य वर्णस्थानसमीरिता।

बभूव कृतसम्स्कारा चरितार्थव भारती॥ १०-३६

purāṇasya kavestasya varṇasthānasamīritā।

babhūva kṛtasamskāra caritārthaiva bhāratī || 10-36

10-36. When Lord Vishnu began to speak in a finely tuned and polished voice, using phonetically refined speech and articulate words that were grammatically perfect and highly refined, words that seemed to come out from his mouth like a collection gems, even goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of speech, learning, knowledge and erudition, felt glad and fulfilled. {Saraswati was happy that she has got her due honour when she heard Lord Vishnu speak so elegantly.}

Verse no. 37:

बभौ सदशनज्योत्स्ना सा विभोर्वदनोदगता।

निर्यातशेषा चरणाद्गङ्गेवोर्ध्वप्रवर्तिनी॥ १०-३७

babhau sadaśanajyotsnā sā vibhorvadanodgatā।

niryātaśeṣā caraṇādgāṅgevordhvapravartinī || 10-37

10-37. When the all-able, omnipotent and omniscient Lord Vishnu spoke to the gods, it appeared that the words which came out from his auspicious mouth, through the rows of the Lord's glistening white teeth, were like the streams of river Ganges when it emerged through the many snowy crevices of the lofty heights of the snow-capped Himalayas and rolled down to earth, with its waters glistening and simmering from the sunlight that fell directly on its surface, or was reflected by the snow covered heights of the surrounding mountains.

[Note--According to the lore of the ancient Purans, river Ganges emerged from the toe of Lord Vishnu, and thence descended down to earth in a gigantic stream of white frothy water, cascading down relentlessly with a mighty roar through the countless crevices and fissures of the rocks of the snow-covered heights of the mighty Himalayas. Here, the teeth of Lord Vishnu are compared to the glistening snow of the Himalayas, the stream of words that emerged from his mouth to river Ganges, and the Lord's mouth itself from which came out his auspicious words as the original place from which the pure waters of the Ganges emerged to purify the world.]

Verse no. 38:

**जाने वो रक्षसाक्रान्तावनुभावपराक्रमौ।
अङ्गिनाम् तमसेवोभौ गुणौ प्रथममध्यमौ॥ १०-३८**

jāne vo rakṣasākrāntāvanubhāvaparākramau |
aṅginām tamasevobhau guṇau prathamamadhyamau || 10-38

10-38. Lord Vishnu said: "Oh Gods! I know that your powers and abilities have been subdued and your authority has been trampled upon by the demons led by their king (Ravana) just like the case of a person's good qualities represented by the Sata and Raja gunas are negated or neutralised when his bad qualities represented by the Tama guna become dominant and eclipse the former.

[Note--There are primarily three types of Gunas or qualities and virtues that are present in all living beings. The Tama guna is the worst kind, the Sata guna is the best kind, and the Raja guna lies in between the two. In holy persons, the Sata guna is the dominant player, while in evil persons the Tama guna is heavy over all other gunas. Those who have the Raja guna in prominence, they display the characteristics of good and bad in equal measure. Which of these two is more prominent than the other would determine the overall character and nature of that individual.

Majority of the gods such as Lord Brahma, the creator, and Lord Shiva, the concluder, as well as many great sages, saints and ascetics have the Sata guna as the dominant character. Similarly, many of the gods such as Indra, the king of gods, and junior gods as well as kings and rulers have the Raja guna as the dominant character. All of them are mindful of their deeds and actions, and are careful not to violate the laws of Dharma. But the demons have the Tama guna as a prominent character, which in turn

pushes whatever goodness they might have to the background, thereby making them ruthless, evil, haughty and cruel.

What Lord Vishnu implies here is that though all individuals have these three gunas present in him by default at the time of birth, but if due to certain reason the Tama guna component gets a better hold on the individual, and if he is not able to control its nefarious designs, then gradually the other two gunas, i.e. the Sata and the Raja, are decimated or neutralised within him, and that individual becomes no less than a demon in disguise of a human being.]

Verse no. 39:

विदितम् तप्यमानम् च तेन मे भुवनत्रयम्।

अकामोपनतेनेव साधोर्हृदयमेनसा॥ १०-३९

viditam tapyamānam ca tena me bhuvanatrayam।

akāmopanateneva sādhorhṛdayamenasā || 10-39

10-39. I also know that the demons led by their king (Ravana) are relentlessly tormenting the world and causing immense suffering to its inhabitants just like a sin, even if committed unconsciously or inadvertently by someone, continues to torment the heart of a nice person who can never think of committing a sin, or doing any kind of harm or causing any kind of suffering to anybody. {And when he discovers later on that one or the other of his acts or deeds has caused some kind of unintended misery to others, he is filled with remorse and a lot of guilt, though it may be too late for him to make amends. But this guilt leaves his otherwise pure heart tormented for a very long time, and he becomes immensely remorseful and distressed.}

[Note--The deeds and acts of the demons had spread terror throughout the world, and even those who are not directly hurt by them feel terrorised and fearful of attack any time of the day. This constant fear of the demons had demoralised every creature, and even if one wished to do some kind of religious deed, he would avoid doing it out of fear of being attacked by these demons. It was a constant fear, and its negative effects were felt by everyone in the world even if they were not directly involved in any kind of hostility with the demons.]

Verse no. 40:

कार्येषु चैककार्यत्वादभ्यर्थ्योऽस्मि न वज्रिणा।

स्वयमेव हि वातोऽग्नेः सारथ्यम् प्रतिपद्यते॥ १०-४०

kāryeṣu caikakāryatvādabhyarthyo'smi na vajriṇā।

svayameva hi vāto'gneḥ sārathyam pratipadyate || 10-40

10-40. It is my and Indra's (the king of god's) duty to eliminate the evil forces symbolised by the demons, as well as to grant protection and succour to the world and its living beings. Hence, there was no need for Indra to come here (as the head of the delegation of gods) and plead with me in this regard, just like there is no need to ask the air to help the fire keep burning once it is lit, for the wind-god automatically begins to help the fire-god to do what it is supposed to do--i.e. burn and produce flames¹.

{Since we, me and Indra, have the same goal of protecting the world from the horrors of the demons, there was no real need for Indra to make a special request to me to do so, for it is my duty by default.}

[Note--¹When the fire is lit, it automatically becomes incumbent upon the wind-god represented by the air to help it remain alive. Without the aid of air, the fire would extinguish automatically. So therefore, both the 'fire-god' and the 'wind-god' have to work in tandem to keep the flames of the fire alive, for otherwise the fire would die. Likewise, both myself and Indra are bound by duty to take action jointly, and to help each other in order to maintain law and order in this creation, and should evil forces raise their hood, then we both are equally responsible to tackle this nuisance jointly.]

Verse no. 41:

स्वासिधारापरिहृतः कामम् चक्रस्य तेन मे।

स्थापितो दशमो मूर्धा लभ्यामश इव रक्षसा॥ १०-४१

svāsidhārāparihṛtaḥ kāmam cakrasya tena mei

sthāpito daśamo mūrdhā labhyāṁśa iva rakṣasā || 10-41

10-41. In some previous time, Ravana had offered his nine heads to Lord Shiva to please him. But he did not offer his last tenth head. So far so good, as it appears that he (Ravana) had not done so because destiny had prevailed upon him to preserve his tenth head to be severed by my discus to bring about his death. Hence, so be it; it is now certain that I shall slay him by severing his tenth head.

Verse no. 42:

स्रष्टुर्वरातिसर्गात्तु मया तस्य दुरात्मनः।

अत्यारूढम् रिपोः सोढम् चन्दनेनेव भोगिनः॥ १०-४२

sraṣṭurvarātisargāttu mayā tasya durātmanah।

atyārūḍham ripoḥ soḍham candaneneva bhoginah || 10-42

10-42. Just as a sandalwood tree tolerates a poisonous snake creeping up its stem and branches, in like manner I too had tolerated the rise of the wicked and evil Ravana to respect the boons that he had received from the creator Brahma.

{I had hitherto remained quiet in deference to Brahma as I did not want to undermine his authority, honour and seniority in this creation. But now that all of you gods ask me to intervene, that reservation of mine stands nullified. Now I have to act to respect your wish, as it is a wish for the common good of the world.}

[Note--Ravana had done severe penance and observed austerities to please Brahma. When the Creator asked him to seek some boon as a reward, Ravana asked for invincibility and overriding powers in this world. Once Brahma granted his wish, Ravana became emboldened and went on a rampage. Lord Vishnu says that till now he had kept quiet in deference to Brahma's authority and honour. He also wanted to subtly warn Brahma to be careful next time while granting boons at the drop of a hat, so to say, as his benevolence and magnanimity is often exploited by unscrupulous elements that then cause havoc all around, not even sparing the gods.]

Verse no. 43:

धातारम् तपसा प्रीतम् ययाचे स हि राक्षसः।

दैवात्सर्गादवध्यत्वम् मर्त्येष्वस्थापराङ्मुखः॥ १०-४३

dhātāram tapasā prītam yayāce sa hi rākṣasaḥ।

daivātsargādavadyatvam martyeṣvāsthāparāṇmukhaḥ || 10-43

10-43. Ravana had asked Brahma to grant him a boon of immunity from death and harm so that he would not be killed at the hands of the gods, but he spared humans from this blanket protection for himself as he thought that if the gods won't be able to kill or harm him, then he has no fear from human beings whom he treated as being inconsequential as a humble twig.

{Ravana thought that if all-powerful and immortal gods won't be able to harm or kill him, then surely mortal human beings, who are weaker than the gods, won't be able to do so.}

Verse no. 44:

सोऽहम् दाशरथिर्भूत्वा रणभूमेर्बलिक्षमम्।

करिष्यामि शरैस्तीक्ष्णैस्तच्छिरःकमलोच्चयम्॥ १०-४४

so'ham dāśarathirbhūtvā raṇabhūmerbalikṣamam।

kariṣyāmi śaraistikṣṇaistacchiraḥkamalocchayam || 10-44

10-44. Therefore, to honour your wish and to fulfil my duty as the protector and caretaker of this world, I will take birth in the household of king Dashrath of Ayodhya, and kill that demon Ravana by severing his heads with my arrows and offering these heads to the patron deity of the battle-field just like one offers lotus flowers during a sacred sacrifice.

[Note--Here, Lord Vishnu likens his act of slaying Ravana to a sacred duty done during the performance of a religious sacrifice when he says he will offer his head to the deity of the battle-field as one offers a lotus flower to the deity during a sacrifice. The Lord was implying that he will kill Ravana not as a personal revenge against him, but as part of his moral responsibility and sacred duty to ensure that the world and its innocent creatures can live peaceful, and evil forces are brought to justice. If anything is done for wider good and with good intent, then even if it seems wrong from an individual's viewpoint, yet it is justified and an honourable act.]

Verse no. 45:

**अचिराद्यज्वभिर्भागम् कल्पितम् विधिवत्पुनः।
मायाविभिरनालीढमादास्यध्वे निशाचरैः॥ १०-४५**

acirādyajvabhirbhāgam kalpitam vidhivatpunah |
māyāvibhiranālīḍhamādāsyadhve niśācaraiḥ || 10-45

10-45. Oh Gods! Be assured that very soon you will get your share of offerings that are made during sacrifices, which are at present snatched by the demons (called 'Nishchara / niśācara' which literally means 'stalkers of the night').

Verse no. 46:

**वैमानिकाः पुण्यकृतस्त्यजन्तु मरुताम् पथि।
पुष्पकालोकसम्क्षोभम् मेघावरणतत्पराः॥ १०-४६**

vaimānikāḥ puṇyakṛtastyajantu marutām pathi |
puṣpakālokaśamkṣobham meghāvaraṇatatparāḥ || 10-46

10-46. Now therefore, all of you should be free from fear of the demons and their king Ravana. Roam fearlessly in the sky in your air-planes or any other means you like, and don't be scared and go to hide behind the clouds if you see the Pushpak plane carrying Ravana. Don't be afraid of him any more.

Verse no. 47:

**मोक्ष्यध्वे स्वर्गबन्दीनाम् वेणीबन्धनदूषितान्।
शापयन्त्रितपौलस्त्यबलात्कारकचग्रहैः॥ १०-४७**

mokṣyadhve svargabandīnām veṇībandhanadūṣitān |
śāpayantritaṭpaulastyabalātkārakacagrahaiḥ || 10-47

10-47. Ravana had captured countless celestial damsels of the heaven and dragged them to his place by grabbing them by their long hairs. Yet, other than this, he hadn't had the courage to violate their modesty by touching their bodies with a malicious intent out of fear of the curse of Nala-kuber¹. Now, all these damsels would soon be freed, and you can honourably take them back to heaven."

[Note--¹Nala-kuber had once cursed Ravana that if he ever tries to force himself upon a woman against her wish and one who does not like him, then his head would split into seven pieces. This curse was cast by Nala-kuber when his uncle Ravana had once sexually assaulted and tried to force himself upon the former's first wife known as Rambha. Nala-kuber was the son of Kuber, the treasurer of heaven. Refer: Mahabharat, Van Parva, Chapter 264, verse nos. 58-59.]

Verse no. 48:

**रावणावग्रहक्लान्तमिति वागमृतेन सः।
अभिवृष्य मरुत्सस्यम् कृष्णमेघस्तिरोदधे ॥ १०-४८**

rāvaṇāvagrahaklāntamiti vāgamṛtena saḥ।
abhivṛṣya marutsasyam kṛṣṇameghastirodadhe || 10-48

10-48. In this aforesaid manner, Lord Vishnu disappeared from sight after assuring the gods and making them feel contented and happy. It was just the case of a dark rain-bearing cloud first showering its cool and life-restoring rain to restore life on a parched land that had been scorched by the heat of the sun, and then disappearing from sight.

Here in this analogy, Lord Vishnu is like the rain-bearing cloud, his words of assurance are like the cool life-restoring rain, the tormented gods are like the parched land, and the horrors of Ravana are like the heat of the sun that had brought drought to the world in the form of immense sufferings.

Verse no. 49:

**पुरहूतप्रभृतयः सुरकार्योद्यतम् सुराः।
अम्शैरनुययुर्विष्णुम् पुष्पैर्वायुमिव द्रुमाः ॥ १०-४९**

purahūtaprabhṛtayaḥ surakāryodyatam surāḥ।
amśairanuyayurviṣṇuṁ puṣṭpairvāyumiva drumāḥ || 10-49

10-49. Just like trees welcome and offer their obeisance to the wind by letting the fragrance of their flowers follow the course of the wind in its wake, so did the gods decide to honour Lord Vishnu and follow him to earth by revealing a fraction of their selves in the form of monkeys and bears to help the Lord when he manifests himself in

the form of a human being by taking birth in the household of king Dashrath (as promised by Lord Vishnu in verse no. 44 herein above).

[Note--The flowers inherently have a natural fragrance, but it remains limited to the area immediately surrounding the tree and its branches. It is only when the breeze blows that this fragrance spreads to other parts of the garden and wider area around it. If there are countless trees of a particular variety in a garden, then a strong breeze would carry the combined fragrance of all the flowers far and wide, making people aware of the existence of a particular variety of flower in areas from where the eye cannot actually see either the garden or its trees.

Similarly, when Lord Vishnu revealed himself as Lord Ram, then all the gods revealed themselves too in the form of monkeys and bears who took birth and spread over a wide swathe of land. Their presence would have gone unnoticed as is the presence of myriad other animals on this earth, had they not participated in the army of Lord Ram when the Lord fought with Ravana in order to kill him. This is like the wind represented by Lord Ram carrying the fragrance of the flowers representing the fame of these monkeys and bears to all corners of the world of that time, and also make them immortal in the annals of history in the future.]

Verse no. 50:

अथ तस्य विशाम्पत्युरन्ते कामस्य कर्मणः।

पुरुषः प्रबभूवाग्नेर्विस्मयेन सहर्त्विजाम्॥ १०-५०

atha tasya viśāmpatyurante kāmasya karmaṇaḥ।

puruṣaḥ prababhūvāgnervismayena sahartvijām || 10-50

10-50. Meanwhile, almost at the same time, the son-begetting fire sacrifice being conducted by king Dashrath neared completion. And in its final hour, a divine form representing the fire-god appeared from the sacrificial pit. His form was so magnificent and divine that everyone who beheld it, including the priests who were conducting the fire sacrifice rituals, were awed and astonished.

Verse no. 51:

हेमपात्रगतम् दोर्भ्यामादधानः पयश्चरुम्।

अनुप्रवेशादाद्यस्य पुम्सस्तेनापि दुर्वहम्॥ १०-५१

hemapātragatam dorbhyāmādadhānaḥ payas̥carum।

anupraveśādādyasya pumsastenāpi durvahaṃ || 10-51

10=51. That divine Being (the fire-god) held a small golden pot (a cup or a similar vessel) by both his hands. This pot was filled with a sweet pudding which contained the essence of Lord Vishnu in an invisible form.

The fire-god had to use both his hands to hold this pot because of the fact that it had Lord Vishnu's presence in it, albeit in a very subtle form (i.e. in an atomic form or microscopic form), and the Lord bears the whole world symbolically on his shoulders, thereby making the pot containing the pudding heavier than usual.

Verse no. 52:

प्राजापत्योपनीतम् तदन्नम् प्रत्यग्रहीन्नृपः।

वृषेव पयसाम् सारमाविष्कृतमुदन्वता॥ १०-५२

prājāpatyopanītam tadannam pratyagrahīnnrpaḥ।

vṛṣeva payasām sāramāviṣkṛtamudanvatā || 10-52

10-52. Just like Indra, the king of gods, had accepted the pot of Amrit (ambrosia of eternity) when the deity of the ocean had revealed himself and offered it to Indra (during the event of the 'churning of the ocean' in some ancient era), so likewise king Dashrath too accepted the pot containing the blessed liquid cheerfully from the divine form representing the fire-god.

Verse no. 53:

अनेन कथिता राज्ञो गुणास्तस्यान्यदुर्लभाः।

प्रसूतिम् चकमे तस्मिन्स्त्रैलोक्यप्रभवोऽपि यत्॥ १०-५३

anena kathitā rājño guṇāstasyānyadurlabhāḥ।

prasūtim cakame tasmimstrailokyaprabhavo'pi yat || 10-53

10-53. That divine Being praised king Dashrath and his many virtues so lavishly that Lord Vishnu, who was hearing all this while residing imperceptibly in a microscopic form in the blessed pudding that the divine Being had offered to the king, felt glad at his decision of choosing king Dashrath's household to manifest himself.

Verse no. 54:

स तेजो वैष्णवम् पत्न्योर्विभेजे चरुसम्जितम्।

द्यावापृथिव्योः प्रत्यग्रमहर्षतिरिवातपम्॥ १०-५४

sa tejo vaiṣṇavam patnyorvibheje carusamjñitam।

dyāvāpṛthivyoh pratyagramaharpatirivātapam || 10-54

10-54. Just like the case of the sun distributing its rays evenly between the sky and the earth in the morning hours (thereby lighting both the sky and the earth at the same time), so in like manner king Dashrath distributed that blessed pudding equally between his two queens, Kaushalya and Kaikeyi.

Verse no. 55:

अर्चिता तस्य कौसल्या प्रिया केकयवम्शजा।

अतः सम्भाविताम् ताभ्याम् सुमित्रामैच्छदीश्वरः॥ १०-५५

arcitā tasya kausalyā priyā kekayavamśajā।

ataḥ sambhāvitām tābhyām sumitrāmaicchadīśvaraḥ || 10-55

10-55. Kaushalya was king Dashrath's senior queen, and Kaikeyi was his favourite. That is why the king gave each of them equal half of the sweet pudding. But he also desired that his third queen Sumitra should also get some share, so he hinted to those who received the blessed pudding to share a part of their own portion to Sumitra to please her. {This will obviously ensure goodwill amongst these three chief queens. Further, Sumitra would be personally obliged to both Kaushalya and Kaikeyi for sharing with her their own share.}

Verse no. 56:

ते बहुज्ञस्य चित्तज्ञे पत्नौ पत्युर्महीक्षितः।

चरोरर्धार्धभागाभ्याम् तामयोजयतामुभे॥ १०-५६

te bahujñasya cittajñe patnau patyurmahīkṣitaḥ।

carorardhārdhabhāgābhyām tāmajayatāmubhe || 10-56

10-56. The two queens, who were fortunate to receive one half of the blessed pudding, could sense king Dashrath's desire (as hinted in verse no. 55 herein above), so they cheerfully gave half of their own portion to Sumitra to make her feel happy. {Hence, Sumitra actually got two quarters or one half of the entire pudding in two parts, because Kaushalya divided her share into two, which meant one quarter of the entire pudding, and similarly Kaikeyi too divided her own share into two equal parts, which meant another quarter of the whole pudding. Then they gave Sumitra these two parts individually, which when added together amounted to one half of the entire volume of the pudding.]

Verse no. 57:

सा हि प्रणयवत्यासीत्सपत्न्योरुभयोरपि।

भमरी वारणस्येव मदनिस्यन्दरेखयोः॥ १०-५७

sā hi praṇayavatyāsītsapatnyorubhayorapi |
bhramarī vāraṇasyeva madanisyandarekhayoḥ || 10-57

10-57. Just as the female bee (bhramarī) loves to drink the viscous, mucous-like secretion from the temples of mature elephants in a rut, so did Sumitra also develop a bond of affection with her partner queens (Kaushalya and Kaikeyi) after they willingly shared their own portion of the son-begetting divine liquid with her.

Verse no. 58:

ताभिर्गर्भः प्रजाभूत्यै दध्रे देवाम्शसम्भवः।
सौरीभिरिव नाडीभिरमृताख्याभिरम्मयः॥ १०-५८

tābhirgarbhaḥ prajābhūtyai dadhre devāmsasambhavaḥ |
saurībhiriva nāḍībhiramṛtākhyābhirammayaḥ || 10-58

10-58. Just like the case of the sunrays being instrumental in evaporating water molecules from the oceans and the seas in an imperceptible way, and then turning these water molecules into clouds that finally shower the same water in abundance in a visible form on earth to spread cheer on it, likewise Lord Vishnu entered the womb of these queens in an imperceptible way to cheer up the world when he would finally reveals himself in the form of four brothers.

[Note--This verse clearly implies that all the four brothers, i.e. Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were the same divine Being in different forms and playing different roles just as the case of the same water falling down on earth in the form of rain at different places, on different occasions, and at different points of time of the year. Depending on the season and time of the year, the rain is assigned different names--such as summer time rain, winter time rain, autumnal rain, spring time rain etc. Essentially, rain water is the same.

When the sunrays evaporate water from the oceans and the seas, no one can see it happen. Then this water accumulates and forms clouds in the sky, but still no one can see water in the cloud. Then, when the ripe time comes, the clouds shower this accumulated water as rain. Everyone can see the cloud and the rain falling from it, but no one can see the water evaporating with the help of the sun's hot rays and the formation of the cloud in the sky.

Likewise, no one could see the presence of Lord Vishnu in a subtle form within the pudding, which is here likened to the cloud, but the Lord's presence was known only when the four brothers took birth just like the presence of water in the cloud is revealed when the water falls from it as rain.]

Verse no. 59:

सममापन्नसत्त्वास्ता रेजुरापाण्डुरत्विषः।

अन्तर्गतफलारम्भाः सस्यानामिव सम्पदः॥ १०-५९

samamāpannasattvāstā rejurāpāṇḍuratviṣaḥ।

antargataphalārambhāḥ sasyānāmiva sampadaḥ || 10-59

10-59. All these three queens conceived at the same time. When they became pregnant, their complexion became pale with a radiant yellow tinge. They resembled stalks of food grains, such as wheat, in which the seed of the grain is slowly maturing. {Such stalks have a yellowish colour.}

Verse no. 60:

गुप्तम् ददृशुरात्मानम् सर्वाः स्वप्नेषु वामनैः।

जलजासिकदाशाङ्गचक्रलाञ्छितमूर्तिभिः॥ १०-६०

guptam dadṛśurātmānam sarvāḥ svapneṣu vāmanaiḥ।

jalajāsikadāśāṅgacakraḥchitamūrtibhiḥ || 10-60

10-60. {From this verse no. 60 to the end of verse no. 63, the various dreams of the queens are narrated.}

The three queens saw a dream in which they saw that a dwarf was protecting them. This dwarf held a conch, sword, mace, and a discus, with a bow named Sharanga slung on his shoulder.

{Since the queens had eaten the divine pudding that contained the essence of Lord Vishnu, the dream meant that the dwarf they saw was none other than Lord Vishnu.}

Verse no. 61:

हेमपक्षप्रभाजालम् गगने च वितन्वता।

उह्यन्ते स्म सुपर्णेन वेगाकृष्टपयोमुचा॥ १०-६१

hemapakṣaprabhājālam gagane ca vitanvatā।

uhyante sma suparṇena vegākṛṣṭapayomucā || 10-61

10-61. In their dreams the queens also saw a magnificent giant bird, like the Garud, the celestial eagle which is the mount of Lord Vishnu, carrying them aloft on its huge golden wings that it had spread wide on both of its sides as it flew through the firmament, scattering the clouds owing to its high speed.

Verse no. 62:

बिभ्रत्या कौस्तुभन्यासम् स्तनान्तरविलम्बितम्।

पर्युपास्यन्त लक्ष्म्या च पद्मव्यजनहस्तया॥ १०-६२

bibhratyā kaustubhanyāsam stanāntaravilambitam।

paryupāsyanta lakṣmīyā ca padmavyajanahastayā || 10-62

10-62. They further saw that goddess Laxmi (who would be their future daughter-in-law in the form of Sita), who was wearing a resplendent necklace chain around her neck with a pendant studded with the Kaustav Mani (jewel), which Lord Vishnu had given to her for keepsake and as a piece of jewellery for the purpose of identification¹, was fanning them with hand-held lotus as is a usual practice for a daughter-in-law who stands in the service of her mother-in-law.

[Note--¹While coming down to earth in an embryonic form to enter the wombs of the three queens, Lord Vishnu had kept the Kaustav jewel with Laxmi as a trust. It was not practically feasible for Lord Vishnu to continue to wear the hard jewel as a pendant when he entered the wombs of the three queens as it would have torn their innards to shred.

The 'Kaustav Mani' is a jewel that was obtained from the ocean at the time of its churning in some ancient time by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity. Its a special jewel that is one of its kind and worn exclusively by Lord Vishnu.]

Verse no. 63:

कृताभिषेकैर्दिव्यायाम् त्रिस्रोतसि च सप्तभिः।

ब्रह्मर्षिभिः परम् ब्रह्म गृणद्भिरुपतस्थिरे॥ १०-६३

kṛtābhiṣekairdivyāyām trisrotasi ca saptabhiḥ।

brahmarṣibhiḥ param brahma gṛṇadbhirupatasthire || 10-63

10-63. Not only this, the queens also observed that great sages led by Kashyap, after having taken a ritualistic bath in the celestial river called 'Akash Ganga' representing the original stream of the holy river Ganges that flows through the heaven, were chanting Vedic hymns while worshipping the Supreme Lord (Vishnu) who presently resided in their wombs in an embryonic form.

{These sages faced the queens and offered their obeisance to them because they held the queens in high esteem as Lord Vishnu himself dwelt in their wombs in an embryonic form. When these sages stood facing the queens and offered their worship to the latter, it was not the queens whom these sages actually worshipped, but the Supreme Lord who lived inside their wombs whom they were offering their obeisance. It can also be interpreted as meaning that the sages were honouring the queens to show great respect to them as they were exceptionally fortunate and blessed to have Lord Vishnu as their future son.}

Verse no. 64:

ताभ्यस्तथाविधान्स्वप्नाञ्छ्रुत्वा प्रीतो हि पार्थिवः।
मेने परार्ध्यमात्मानम् गुरुत्वेन जगद्गुरोः॥ १०-६४

tābhyastathāvidhānsvapnāñchrutvā prīto hi pārthivah।
mene parārdhyamātmānam gurutvena jagadguroḥ || 10-64

10-64. When the queens shared their dreams with king Dashrath, he felt exceedingly happy and gratified as he instantly realised how fortunate and blessed he was that he would soon be becoming the worldly father of Lord Vishnu who was the Lord of the creation. No other human being on this earth has had this rarest of rare privilege. This thought sent thrill through king Dashrath.

Verse no. 65:

विभक्त आत्मा विभुस्तासामेकः कुक्षिष्वनेकधा।
उवास प्रतिमाचन्द्रः प्रसन्नानामपामिव॥ १०-६५

vibhakta ātmā vibhustāsāmekah।
uvāsa pratimācandraḥ prasannānāmapāmiva || 10-65

10-65. Even as the same moon is seen in multiple forms when it is reflected in the calm waters of multiple vessels, so did the same and immutable Lord Vishnu appeared separately in the wombs of the three queens.

{All the three queens had the same essence of Lord Vishnu growing in their wombs. Though from worldly perspective all these embryos were different, growing separately in three different wombs, yet since their essence was the same, they had the same gene and the same DNA as that of Lord Vishnu. It was like viewing the same moon through its clear reflection in three different vessels containing calm and undisturbed water.}

Verse no. 66:

अथाग्र्यमहिषी राज्ञः प्रसूतिसमये सती।
पुत्रम् तमोऽपहम् लेभे नक्तम् ज्योतिरिवौषधिः॥ १०-६६

athāgryamahīṣī rājñah।
putram tamo'paham lebhe naktam jyotirivauşadhiḥ || 10-66

10-66. In due course of time when the pregnancy matured and the time of delivery arrived (in the tenth month since conception), the chaste and the senior-most queen of

king Dashrath delivered an auspicious son (who would be named Lord Ram later on) having a halo of light of divinity around him which dispelled darkness of negativity just like a certain kind of herb that emanates light in the darkness of the night¹, thereby removing darkness and marking its presence by illuminating its surroundings.

[Note--¹There are many plants that glow in the night due to the presence of certain bio-luminescent substances in them. They are fluorescent plants emitting a glow. Similarly, there are certain bio-luminescent mushroom too.

Some of these self-glowing plants are the following--Firefly Petunia (farfugium japonicum) which emits a neon-green light from its flowers and leaves, Moonflower (Ipomoea alba), Night Phlox (zaluzyanskya capensis), Evening Primrose (oenothera biennis), and Jack-o-lantern Mushroom.]

Verse no. 67:

राम इत्यभिरामेण वपुषा तस्य चोदितः।
नामधेयम् गुरुश्चक्रे जगत्प्रथममङ्गलम्॥ १०-६७

rāma ityabhirāmeṇa vapuṣā tasya coditaḥ।
nāmadheyam guruścakre jagatprathamamaṅgalam || 10-67

10-67. Moved by the exceptional charm and attractive features of that child, his father king Dashrath rejoiced. He named the auspicious child 'Ram' which symbolically meant the 'charmer who would grant auspiciousness and blessing to the whole world'.

Verse no. 68:

रघुवम्शप्रदीपेन तेनाप्रतिमतेजसा।
रक्षागृहगता दीपाः प्रत्यादिष्टा इवाभवन्॥ १०-६८

raghuvamśapradīpena tenāpratimatejasā।
rakṣāgṛhagatā dīpāḥ pratyādiṣṭā ivābhavan || 10-68

10-68. The incomparable radiance and the divine halo of that new-born child named Ram, who was like the beacon light of the dynasty of king Raghu, dimmed the light emanating from the crystal lamps present in the room.

Verse no. 69:

शय्यागतेन रामेण माता शातोदरी बभौ।
सैकताम्भोजबलिना जाह्नवीव शरत्कृशा॥ १०-६९

śayyāgatena rāmeṇa mātā śātodarī babhau |
saikatāmbhojabalinā jāhnavīva śaratkr̥ṣā || 10-69

10-69. Mother Kaushalya, lying on the bed with a slender belly after delivering the child Ram who lay by her side, looked like a thin stream of river Ganges during the autumn season with a blue lotus flower offered to the river lying on its sandy banks.

[Note--In this verse, mother Kaushalya is likened to river Ganges as seen in the autumn season when the river shrinks into a thin stream as opposed to its swollen form full of water during the rainy season, and the child Ram lying by her side is compared to the lotus flower that lies on the bank of the river after a devotee had offered it to the holy river after paying respect to it.

After delivery of the child, the mother's belly shrank to its original size. The soft bed is likened to the sandy bank of the river Ganges.]

Verse no. 70:

कैकेय्यास्तनयो जज्ञे भरतो नाम शीलवान् |
जनयित्रीमलमचक्रे यः प्रश्रय इव श्रियम् ॥ १०-७०

kaikeyyāstanayo jajñe bharato nāma śīlavān |
janayitrīmalamcakre yaḥ praśraya iva śriyam || 10-70

10-70. A virtuous son named Bharat was born to mother Kaikeyi. He glorified his mother just like the virtue of modesty is an adornment of prosperity.

[Note--Though Bharat was a treasury of excellent characters, he was modest, quiet and virtuous. Bharat was not pretentious and haughty. He was like a good gentleman who, though blessed with immense prosperity and immeasurable wealth, maintains modesty and humility, never flaunting his wealth and boasting around about it. Goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity, feels proud of such a man who never flaunts his riches but thinks that whatever he has is a blessing of the Lord, making him humble and polite. Bharat was like this gentleman. And obviously a mother who has such a virtuous son would be very happy and proud of him as he brings glory to her too.]

Verse no. 71:

सुतौ लक्ष्मणशत्रुघ्नौ सुमित्रा सुषुवे यमौ |
सम्यगाराधिता विद्या प्रबोधविनयाविव ॥ १०-७१

sutau lakṣmaṇaśatrughnau sumitrā suṣuve yamau |
samyagārādhitā vidyā prabodhavinayāviva || 10-71

10-71. Mother Sumitra, meanwhile, gave birth to two sons named Laxman and Shatrughan. These two sons too had excellent characters and brought glory to their mother. These two sons were self-controlled, wise and polite just as acquisition of deep knowledge and the virtue of erudition makes a person learned and sagacious, which in turn makes him calm and sage-like.

Verse no. 72:

निर्दोषमभवत्सर्वमाविष्कृतगुणम् जगत्।

अन्वगादिव हि स्वर्गो गाम् गतम् पुरुषोत्तमम्॥ १०-७२

nirdoṣamabhavatsarvamāviṣkṛtaguṇam jagatI

anvagādiva hi svargo gām gatam puruṣottamam || 10-72

10-72. With the advent of these four sons who represented Lord Vishnu, the world was so much the richer with the virtue of auspiciousness. The negativity in the world declined, and positive characters became ascendant. Resentment, animosity and misery declined, and happiness, joy, brotherhood and contentment rose.

Verse no. 73:

तस्योदये चतुर्मूर्तेः पौलस्त्यचकितेश्वराः।

विरजस्कैर्नभस्वद्भिर्दिश उच्छवसिता इव॥ १०-७३

tasyodaye caturmūrteḥ paulastyacakiteśvarāḥI

virajaskairnabhasvadbhirdiśa ucchvasitā iva || 10-73

10-73. A clean wind free from dust began blowing over all the quarters of the earth symbolising the freedom with which all the guardians of the mortal world who could now breathe freely, without the fear of the descendants of Pulastya (i.e. the demon king Ravana and his kin), after the Lord of the world descended on earth in the form of Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan to protect them.

Verse no. 74:

कृशानुरपधूमत्वात्प्रसन्नत्वात्प्रभाकरः।

रक्षोविप्रकृतावास्तामपविद्धशुचाविव॥ १०-७४

kṛśānurapadhūmatvātprasannatvātprabhākarahI

rakṣoviprakṛtāvāstāmapavidhṣucāviva || 10-74

10-74. The heavenly Sun-god and the Fire-god were constantly afraid of Ravana as symbolised by the dullness in their light. But they now exhibited their happiness at the birth of their protector (Lord Vishnu in the form of the four brothers) by shining with a brilliant light that dazzled the beholder.

Verse no. 75:

दशाननकिरीटेभ्यस्तत्क्षणम् राक्षसश्रियः।

मणिव्याजेन पर्यस्ताः पृथिव्यामश्रुबिन्दवः॥ १०-७५

daśānanakirīṭebhyastatkṣaṇam rākṣasaśriyaḥ।

maṇivṛyājena paryastāḥ pṛthivyāmaśrubindavaḥ || 10-75

10-75. During those moments when Lord Ram and his brothers were born, some gems from the crown of the demon king Ravana got dislodged and fell to the ground as if the patron deity, who had been protecting the demon king for so long, was shedding tears.

[Note--This falling of the gems from his crown, without any visible cause, was a very bad omen for Ravana. It signified that his crown, symbolising his power and authority, was in grave danger. In this analogy, these falling of gems resembled tears rolling down from the eyes of the patron deity of Lanka who was protecting Ravana till now, as she now wept and lamented at his doomed fate.]

Verse no. 76:

पुत्रजन्मप्रवेश्यानाम् तूर्याणाम् तस्य पुत्रिणः।

आरम्भम् प्रथमम् चक्रुर्देवदुन्दुभयो दिवि॥ १०-७६

putrajanmapraveśyānām tūryāṇām tasya putriṇaḥ।

ārambham prathamam cakrurdevadundubhaya divi || 10-76

10-76. Even before king Dashrath could order playing of drums and other musical instruments to celebrate the birth of his four sons, the gods in the heaven had already started rejoicing and playing pipes, drums and trumpets in heaven to express their joy and happiness at the advent of Lord Vishnu, their protector, on earth to save them from the constant torments they had been subjected to by Ravana.

Verse no. 77:

सन्तानकमयी वृष्टिर्भवने चास्य पेतुषी।

सन्मङ्गलोपचाराणाम् सैवादिचरणाऽभवत्॥ १०-७७

santānakamayī vṛṣṭirbhavane cāśya petuṣī |
sanmaṅgalopacārāṇām saivādiracanā'bhavat || 10-77

10-77. A shower of flowers of the evergreen tree called Kalpa Tree rained down on king Dashrath's palace from the heaven, marking the beginning of the elaborate celebrations and religious rituals that commenced to commemorate the auspicious occasion of the birth the four charming princes as heirs of the king.

Verse no. 78:

कुमाराः कृतसम्स्कारास्ते धात्रीस्तन्यपायिनः।
आनन्देनाग्रजेनेव समम् ववृधिरे पितुः॥ १०-७८

kumārāḥ kṛtasamskāṛāste dhātrīstanyapāyinaḥ |
ānandenāgrajeneva samam vavṛdhire pituḥ || 10-78

10-78. King Dashrath was extremely exhilarated at the birth of the four princes (as now he was freed from the curse of being childless, and hence having no one to become his heir and inherit his kingdom). The various religious rituals were conducted with great ceremony and pomp even as the joy of the king went on increasing day-by-day in the same proportion as the growth of the eldest son (i.e. Lord Ram) along with his three other siblings who began to grow up by sucking milk from the breast of their nurses¹ (dhātrīstanyapāyinaḥ).

[Note--¹This verse explicitly states that the four brothers had sucked milk from the breast of their respective nurses instead of their mothers as is the norm.]

Verse no. 79:

स्वाभाविकम् विनीतत्वम् तेषाम् विनयकर्मणा।
मुमूर्च्छ सहजम् तेजो हविषेव हविर्भुजाम्॥ १०-७९

svābhāvikam vinītatvam teṣām vinayakarmanā |
mumūrccha sahajam tejo haviṣeva havirbhujām || 10-79

10-79. Just as the flames of fire are augmented by addition of clarified butter and other combustible material into the fire pit, Lord Ram and his siblings' excellent natural qualities such as humility and other good characters began to shine and come to the fore as they gradually grew up and acquired good education and training (under the guidance of their teacher, sage Vashistha)¹ that made them rich with knowledge, erudition and wisdom.

[Note--Lord Ram and his three brothers were taught by sage Vashistha, the chief priest and moral preceptor of the rulers of Ayodhya--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 204.]

Verse no. 80:

परस्परविरुद्धास्ते तद्रगोरनघम् कुलम्।
अलमुद्योतयामासुर्देवारण्यमिवर्तवः॥ १०-८०

parasparaviruddhāste tadragoranagham kulam।
alamudyotayāmāsurdēvāraṇyamivartavaḥ || 10-80

10-80. Just as wind of the different seasons, though of varying kinds, spread the fragrance of the sandalwood tree uniformly in the celestial garden, so likewise the mutual love and affection of the four brothers as well as their brotherliness enhanced the glory of the family to which they belonged, i.e. dynasty of king Raghu.

[Note--The idea is that though the four brothers had varying qualities, nature and characteristics at the individual level, yet they never quarrelled or spoke against each other. They lived friendly and amiably. They ate together, played together, slept together, studied together, and grew up together. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 10.]

Verse no. 81:

समानेऽपि च सौभ्रात्रे यथेभौ रामलक्ष्मणौ।
तथा भरतशत्रुघ्नौ प्रीत्या द्वन्द्वम् बभूवतुः॥ १०-८१

samāne'pi ca saubhrātre yathebhou rāmalakṣmaṇau।
tathā bharataśatrughnau prītyā dvandvam babhūvatuḥ || 10-81

10-81. Though there was unequivocal brotherly affection between all the four brothers, yet some unique affinity and an underlying sense of mutual attachment and respect, coupled with a bond of love and affection for each other, paired the four brothers into two groups, one such pair being that of Lord Ram and Laxman, and the other being that of Bharat and Shatrughan.

Verse no. 82:

तेषाम् द्वयोर्द्वयोरैक्यम् बिभिदे न कदाचन।
यथा वायुर्विभावस्वोर्यथा चन्द्रसमुद्रयोः॥ १०-८२

teṣām dvayordvayoraikyam bibhīde na kadācana |
yathā vāyurvibhāvasvoryathā candrasamudrayoḥ || 10-82

10-82. The unity and bond of love and affection between the brothers of a group were solid and unbreakable, while at the same time, the two groups too shared a mutual bond of affection between them. The bond and relationship between the two brothers of a group was like that of the wind or air and fire, or between the moon and the sea¹.

{Though the two brothers of a group had developed special affinity for each other, it did not mean that it effected the mutual brotherliness and love that existed between all the four brothers in the general way. Like two teams playing a game, with each team having two members, the four brothers formed two groups that stood with each other, shoulder-to-shoulder when the need arose, yet when left alone, the members of one group had the tendency to stick with each other more closely most of the time. To wit, Laxman and Lord Ram preferred to stay together, and Bharat and Shatrughan did likewise.}

[Note--¹The fire and air share a special bond as the latter keeps the former lighted. Strong gust of wind would normally blow out the fire, but another form of it as the 'air' is also needed to keep the fire lighted. Similarly, the water of the sea rises during the night of the full moon, showing the affinity that exists between the sea and the full moon. The same sea won't rise under the sun, but it would under the light of the full moon.

Thus, for example, Lord Ram felt very happy in the company of Laxman, and vice-versa. Similarly, Bharat felt happy with Shatrughan by his side, and vice-versa.]

Verse no. 83:

ते प्रजानाम् प्रजानाथास्तेजसा प्रश्रयेण च |
मनो जहृर्निदाघान्ते श्यामाभ्रा दिवसा इव ॥ १०-८३

te prajānām prajānāthāstejasā praśrayeṇa ca |
mano jahurnidāghānte śyāmābhrā divasā iva || 10-83

10-83. Just as rain-bearing clouds at the end of the scorching days of summer enamour the minds of the people, so did the four princes endeared themselves to the mind and heart of the subjects of the kingdom with their amiable nature, excellent characters, and polite and friendly behaviour.

[Note--After the hot tormenting days of summer, people yearn to see the rain-bearing clouds which would shower the much-wanted and much-awaited rain to cool the land and provide succour and joy to the thirsty populace. Similarly, by their friendly nature, polite demeanours, good characters and humility, the four young princes captured the mind and the heart of the citizens of Ayodhya. This situation can be compared with that when the princes might have been rude and reckless, as when they grow up to become kings, the citizens would have to suffer a lot. Hence, all the subjects of the kingdom thanked their

good fortune and rejoiced at their favourable fate to have their future kings so nice and friendly.]

Verse no. 84:

स चतुर्धा बभौ व्यस्तः प्रसवः पृथिवीपतेः।
धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणामवतार इवाङ्गवान्॥ १०-८४

sa caturdhā babhau vyastah prasavaḥ pṛthivīpateḥ।
dharmārthakāmamokṣāṇāmatāra ivāṅgavān || 10-84

10-84. The four auspicious sons of king Dashrath were so good and endowed with such excellent virtues that they were like the personified forms of the four great rewards of Dharma, Artha, Kaam and Moksha¹ which accrue as blessings to a noble and righteous person who does his duties diligently and in a righteous manner.

[Note--¹The four rewards or blessings of leading a good life and doing one's duty diligently are the following: (i) Dharma--auspiciousness as well as an aura of holiness and piety that invite all-round honour and respect; (ii) Artha--financial well-being, prosperity; (iii) Kaam--fulfilment of all desires; and (iv) Moksha--freedom from the cycle of transmigration.]

Verse no. 85:

गुणैराराधयामासुस्ते गुरुम् गुरुवत्सलाः।
तमेव चतुरन्तेशम् रत्नैरिव महार्णवाः॥ १०-८५

guṇairārādhayāmāsuste gurum guruvatsalāḥ।
tameva caturanteśam ratnairiva mahārṇavāḥ || 10-85

10-85. Just like the oceans of all the four quarters of the earth had honoured the noble king Dashrath by offering their jewels to him to please him, so did the excellent virtues and stellar characters of the four noble princes made their father Dashrath feel very happy and fortunate. {King Dashrath felt gratified to have such good sons who were no less than jewels in their own right because of their immaculate nature, goodness, characters, virtues, intelligence, discipline, amiable nature, and friendly disposition.}

Verse no. 86:

सुरगज इव दन्तैर्भग्नदैत्यासिधारैर्नय इव पणबन्धव्यक्तयोगैरुपायैः।
हरिरिव युगदीर्घदोर्भिरम्शैस्तदीयैः पतिरवनिपतीनाम् तैश्चकाशे चतुर्भिः॥ १०-८६

suragaja iva dantairbhagnadaityāsidhārai rnaya iva
 paṇabandhavyaktayogairupāyaiḥ |
 haririva yugadīrghairdorbhiraṃśaistadiyaiḥ patiravanipatīnām taiścakāṣe
 caturbhiḥ || 10-86

10-86. Just like the heavenly elephant named Erawat (the mount of Indra, the king of gods) stood honoured after having blunted the sword of the demons with its four mighty tusks (during the legendary battle between the gods and the demons), just like political science has four branches called Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda¹ which enables its practitioner to attain victory over his adversaries, and just like Lord Vishnu looks glorious with his four arms which are as long as the crossbars of a chariot--so likewise the fortunate king Dashrath looked glorious and majestic as well as worthy of praise and honour with his four noble sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) by his side.

[Note--¹Political science advocates the use of four methods to gain an upper hand over one's political opponent and obtain desired result. These four methods are the following: (i) Sam (pronounced 'Saam')--meaning a conciliatory approach; (ii) Daan--meaning giving aid and financial support as an indirect method of bribery; (iii) Danda--meaning punishment and punitive action; and (iv) Bheda--meaning causing dissention and friction between two adversaries, and then quietly supporting one over the other.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवम्श महाकाव्ये दशमः सर्गः

iti kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṃśa mahākāvyē daśamaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends this 10th Canto of Kalidasa's Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 11, verse nos. 1-93:

Introduction:

One day, sage Vishwamitra came to the court of king Dashrath and requested him to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him to protect his fire sacrifice that was being constantly defiled by demons. Though the king was initially very reluctant in sending his beloved young son with the sage as he had been blessed with sons in his ripe old age after severe penance, yet he did not want to refuse the sage and invite his anger, as that would be devastating for all his family. Further, the king knew about the spiritual powers of the sage and his stupendous abilities, which ensured that no harm could ever come to Lord Ram under any circumstances under the protection of sage Vishwamitra.

At the instruction of their father, the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, picked up their bows and followed sage Vishwamitra. The king did not send his army with the two princes to help and protect them, as he was sure that the sage's mystical powers and blessings were enough to ensure that no harm would come to his two sons.

The two young princes had never stepped out of their palace till now, so to help them overcome tiredness and prepare for the job at hand (which was to defeat the demons and protect the fire sacrifice, as well as be ready to face countless hurdles in life and emerge victorious), the sage taught them two mystical sciences known as Balaa and Ati-balaa by the virtue of which knowledge they neither felt tired, nor felt hungry or thirsty.

All the sages, hermits and ascetics who lived on the way in pleasant hermitages that had ponds with blooming lotus flowers and green trees with rich foliage that provided cool shade, felt so happy when they met Lord Ram and Laxman that even the charming natural environment of their hermitages had never given so much satisfaction to them till now.

On the way, they met the ferocious demoness named Tadka, the daughter of Suketu. She had devastated all the surrounding hermitages with her attacks. Sage Vishwamitra had already told Lord Ram and Laxman about her, so as soon as the two brothers saw her, they strung their bows, and pulled the strings by resting one end of the bows on the ground. The thunderous sound emanating from the bows annoyed Tadka who came and stood before them, blocking their way. She had a fearsome dark complexion like that of a dark night when no moon is visible. She yelled menacingly and lunged forward to attack Lord Ram. Overcoming his initial hesitation of shooting at a woman, as the Lord Ram realised that she was a sinful and flesh eating creature who showed no mercy to anyone, and sparing her would invite trouble for him, his younger brother Laxman as well as sage Vishwamitra, the Lord shot a single arrow that tore through Tadka's heart and she fell down. Almost at the same time as her death, the deity that had been protecting the demon king Ravana too shivered out of fear and the prospect of an impending calamity that loomed on the horizon for the demon race.

The slaying of Tadka mightily pleased sage Vishwamitra who now realised that Lord Ram was indeed capable of protecting the world against the scourge of the demons, and therefore the sage gave Lord Ram all the mystical weapons he had, weapons that were needed to eliminate the demons, along with the knowledge regarding their use.

By-and-by, when they reached the sage's hermitage, Lord Ram slayed many great demons (led by Subahu). Lord Ram was such an expert in use of weapons that when the demon army attacked him, he mounted a special arrow known as Vayabya Astra and flung Marich, the son of Tadka, to a far away island, while slaying his brother named Subahu along with his army.

This remarkable feat astonished all the sages who lived in that hermitage. Sage Vishwamitra, meanwhile, successfully completed his fire sacrifice and blessed the two brothers by affectionately putting the palms of his hands on their head.

Almost at the same time as these developments, king Janak, the father of Sita, had organised an elaborate 'Dhanush Yagya' (a ceremony revolving around an ancient bow lying with him). The king had invited all great kings as well as all the great sages of the time to come to attend the ceremony. When the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, came to know about it, they were very curious, and showed interest to witness it. Seeing their enthusiasm, the sage took them along to witness this spectacle in Janakpur.

Evening fell, and so the three, i.e. sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman, stayed for the night under the shade of a tree in a desolate hermitage where sage Gautam's wife Ahilya had been turned into a stone by some curse. Encouraged by sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram touched that stone with his foot, and instantly the curse vanished

and the lifeless stone transformed into a pious lady with a charming countenance (i.e. into Ahilya).

When king Janak heard that the great sage Vishwamitra had come to visit him, he went forward and reverentially welcomed him along with the two brothers who were accompanying the sage. When the two princes entered the city of Janakpur, its citizens were mesmerised by their charm and instantly began to love them.

Sage Vishwamitra then told king Janak that the two princes wished to see the 'bow' which was at the core of the bow ceremony known as the 'Dhanush Yagya'. This ceremony was organised by Sita's father to search for a groom for her. His condition was anyone who was strong and able enough to lift and string the bow would become eligible to wed his daughter Sita. The ceremony had been going on for some days now, yet none of the participating princes and kings could lift the bow, let alone string it.

So, when Janak learnt that Lord Ram wished to have a look at this mysterious bow, he (Janak) was taken aback. He was so much impressed by Lord Ram's personality and charm that he regretted why he had laid the aforesaid condition for Sita's marriage, for had he known about Lord Ram earlier he would have married his daughter to him without a second thought.

Observing Janak's dilemma, the sage told him that the king need not have any regrets as all his conditions would be met by Lord Ram who had the competence to lift and string the bow. The Lord's stupendous abilities and astounding strength would come to the fore only when he is put to test just like the case of the strength of Vajra (the hard weapon of Indra; the thunderbolt) is judged when it strikes the side of a mountain, rupturing it and dislodging its rocks. A spark from the fire and even a small Mantra (mystical formula) have great potentials, as this tiny spark can cause a massive blaze, and the short Mantra can invoke heavenly powers that can supersede all worldly powers.

Thence, king Janak escorted them to the place where the bow was kept ready for anyone to come and test his might against it. Even as everyone watched in stunned amazement, Lord Ram instantly lifted the wondrous bow, stringed it and pulled the string back to such an extent that the bow itself broke into two halves with a mighty roar. As soon as this happened, Sita put the victory garland around Lord Ram's neck.

Exhilarated Janak sent an invitation to king Dashrath to come to Janakpur with the marriage party. King Dashrath was thrilled with happiness, and he quickly made preparation and headed to Janakpur with a large party. The two great kings embraced each other most affectionately, and married all the four sons of Dashrath with four daughters of king Janak's family with great celebrations, observing all religious rites, traditional customs and elaborate ceremonies.

While the grooms' party was heading home to Ayodhya, the great sage Parashuram intervened on the way as he was angry that the bow of his revered Lord Shiva had been broken by Lord Ram. But the Lord's divine charm calmed down the angry sage who handed over his own weapon, the battle-axe, to the Lord and politely went back to his hermitage.

Finally, the party reached Ayodhya with the newly wed princes and their wives amidst great rejoicing and ceremony. The citizens poured out on the streets in large numbers to have a glimpse of the four princes along with their respective wives.

This part of the story of the Ramayana has been narrated in great detail in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 355.

With this background information, now let us proceed with reading this chapter no. 11 from Raghuvansham that follows herein below:

Verse no. 1:

**कौशिकेन स किल क्षितीश्वरो राममध्वरविघातशान्तये।
काकपक्षधरमेत्य याचितः तेजसाम् हि न वयः समीक्ष्यते॥ ११-१**

kausikaena sa kila kṣitīśvaro rāmamadhvaravighātaśāntaye |
kākapakṣadharametya yācitaḥ tejasām hi na vayaḥ samīkṣyate || 11-1

11-1. Now it so happened that one day sage Vishwamitra went to king Dashrath's court and requested him to spare his elder son Lord Ram, who was still a young boy with curly jet-black hairs adorning his temple and the sides of his ears, so that his (sage's) fire sacrifice could be protected from being constantly defiled by attacks of demons. The king agreed with the sage that this outrageous conduct of the demons was not pardonable, and it was his moral duty to do what he could to curb this nuisance and help the sages overcome their torment.

Verse no. 2:

**कृच्छ्रलब्धमपि लब्धवर्णभाक् तम् दिदेश मुनये सलक्ष्मणम्।
अप्यसुप्रणयिनाम् रघोः कुले न व्यहन्यत कदाचिदर्थिता॥ ११-२**

kṛcchralabdhāmapi labdhavarṇabhāk tam dideśa munaye salakṣmaṇam |
apyasupraṇayinām raghoḥ kule na vyahanyata kadācidarthitā || 11-2

11-2. Though initially king Dashrath was very reluctant to send Lord Ram away to face this danger, especially because he had got the four sons in his old age and after great difficulties, but on second thoughts he ultimately decided to send Lord Ram and Laxman with sage Vishwamitra as the king had great respect for great sages, and he was also aware of the sage's immense spiritual powers and potentials that were surely strong enough an insurance for the safety of his two sons.

There was another reason why the king agreed to give his two sons to the sage. It had been an established tradition of the kings of his lineage since ancient times that they never refuse to oblige anyone who is suffering and has come to the king seeking some kind of help him so much so that the king would even risk his own life for the fulfilment of this tradition. {One other reason was that the king feared that his refusal would enrage the sage, and there were fair chances that the sage might curse him for disobedience. This eventuality would be devastating for the whole family.}

Verse no. 3:

यावदादिशति पार्थिवस्तयोः निर्गमाय पुरमार्गसंस्क्रियाम्।
तावदाशु विदधे मरुत्सखैः सा सपुष्पजलवर्षिभिर्घनैः॥ ११-३

yāvadādiśati pārthivastayoḥ nirgamāya puramārgasaṁskriyām |
tāvadāśu vidadhe marutsakhaiḥ sā sapuṣṣajalavarṣibhirghanaiḥ || 11-3

11-3. King Dashrath ordered that the road leading out of the city on which the sage would go back to his hermitage with the two princes should be washed cleaned and properly decorated with flowers. But the gods decided that they would do this themselves to honour Lord Ram. So the wind-god blew breeze that swept all the dust out of the streets, the rain-god showered fragrant water to wash the streets, and the rest of the gods showered flowers to cover the streets and make it cushioned as if a red-carpet was spread out on the ground to honour Lord Ram and Laxman along with sage Vishwamitra.

Verse no. 4:

तौ निदेशकरणोद्यतौ पितुः धन्विनौ चरणयोर्निपेततुः।
भूपतेरपि तयोः प्रवत्स्यतोः नमयोरुपरि बाष्पबिन्दवः॥ ११-४

tau nideśakaraṇodyatau pituḥ dhanvinau caraṇayornipetatuh |
bhūpaterapi tayoh pravatsyatoḥ namrayorupari bāṣṣabindavaḥ || 11-4

11-4. Both Lord Ram and Laxman picked up their bows and quivers and came to bow before their father, expressing their willingness to obey his commands. Tears rolled down from the eyes of an emotional king Dashrath and fell on the two brothers as they bent down to touch his feet and get his blessings before departure.

Verse no. 5:

तौ पितुर्नयनजेन वारिणा किञ्चिदुक्षितशिखण्डकावुभौ।
धन्विनौ तमृषिमन्वगच्छताम् पौरदृष्टिकृतमार्गतोरणौ॥ ११-५

tau piturnayanajena vāriṇā kiṁcidukṣitaśikhaṇḍakāvubhau |
dhanvinau tamṛṣimanvagacchatām pauradrṣṭikṛtamārgatoraṇau || 11-5

11-5. The tear drops that fell from the eyes of king Dashrath had wetted the lock of curled hairs on the temples and the sides of the ears of the two princes holding a bow each as they followed sage Vishwamitra. The citizens of Ayodhya came out in droves to say an emotional good-bye to them, and their affectionate glances from all sides resembled the buntings and festoons that were put up to honour the two princes as they passed through the streets.

[Note--The citizens lined the street and cheered. They held small colourful flags, flowers, and waved their hands as the two princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, accompanied sage Vishwamitra as they wended their way through the city's main street and headed to the sage's hermitage. It appeared that the street was lined by buntings and festoons.]

Verse no. 6:

लक्ष्मणानुचरमेव राघवम् नेतुमैच्छदृषिरित्यसौ नृपः।

आशिषम् प्रयुयुजे न वाहिनीम् सा हि रक्षणविधौ तयोः क्षमा॥ ११-६

lakṣmaṇānucarameva rāghavam netumaicchadrṣirityasau nṛpaḥ |
āśiṣam prayuyuje na vāhinīm sā hi rakṣaṇavidhau tayoḥ kṣamā || 11-6

11-6. The king would normally have sent a detachment of his troops to accompany the two princes when they ventured out of the city for the purpose of their safety, but the king did not do so in deference to the venerable sage Vishwamitra's greatness as he was fully aware that the sage had such immensity of spiritual powers and possessed such stupendous mystical abilities that they were in themselves a sure-shot insurance against any harm coming to the two princes whose safety was now the sage's responsibility.

The king was sure that the venerated sage's blessings and benediction were enough to ensure that his sons were safe and secure with him, and sending soldiers to guard them would imply that the king had no faith in the sage and his abilities to protect his two sons, and this situation would be disastrous for both the king and his two beloved sons as well as their family as the sage might take umbrage at it, and annoying a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra was never a good option.

Verse no. 7:

मातृवर्गचरणस्पृशौ मुनेः तौ प्रपद्य पदवीम् महौजसः।

रेजतुर्गतिवशात्प्रवर्तिनौ भास्करस्य मधुमाधवाविव॥ ११-७

mātrvargacaraṇasprśau muneḥ tau prapadya padavīm mahaujasah |
rejaturgativaśātpurvartinau bhāskarasya madhumādhavāviva || 11-7

11-7. Before leaving with sage Vishwamitra, the two young princes touched the feet of their respective mothers to seek their blessings and permission to leave. Then when they followed the powerful sage it appeared as if the two months of Chaitra and Vaisakha were following the Sun.

[Note--The Chaitra and Vaisakha months, roughly corresponding to the months of March & April, and May & June respectively, are very hot and scorching as the sun shines directly over the head, with no shade from the clouds to provide any relief. In this analogy, sage Vishwamitra is like the sun, and Lord Ram and Laxman are like the two

months of Chaitra and Vaisakha because they would cause immense problems for the demon race just like these two months cause immense suffering for the creatures because of the intense heat of the sun during the course of these months.

Metaphorically, this verse means that just like the heat of these two months of summer cause immense suffering to the creatures and scorch the earth so would Lord Ram and Laxman scorch the demons. They would be aided by the stupendous spiritual and mystical powers of sage Vishwamitra just like the powerful sun provides its heat to these two months to enable them to scorch the earth and its inhabitants, for without the help of the sun the months themselves would not be hot enough to do anything.

When Lord Ram and Laxman would unleash their arrows at the demons under guidance and blessings of sage Vishwamitra, then these demons would find no shelter anywhere just like no succour is available to the world during these two months. Even standing under a tree doesn't help as the entire atmosphere is burning hot.]

Verse no. 8:

वीचिलोलभुजयोस्तयोर्गतम् शैशवाच्चपलमप्यशोभत।

तोयदागमे इवोद्धयभिद्ययोः नामधेयसदृशम् विचेष्टितम्॥ ११-८

vīcilolabhujayostayorgatam śaiśavāccapalamapyāśobhata |

tooyadāgame ivoddhyabhidyayoḥ nāmadheyasadrśam viceṣṭitam || 11-8

11-8. These two princes were young and energetic, and they had ventured out for the first time unguarded by royal servants into the verdant green countryside that was resplendent with varied colours and charming fragrance of flowers, leaves and herbs. Hence, they felt free and liberated from the shackles of royalty while thoroughly enjoying the beauty of Nature on their own terms. They were very restless, going here and there and waving their long arms at every sundry sight they saw. Their vibrant energy and enthusiastic gait was so captivating and dynamic that they reminded the beholder of the two rivers named Udhya and Bhidya that surge and gush forward with such vigour and energy during the rainy months, when they are filled with abundance of rain-water, that they collapse anything that comes in their way, with their heaving waves splashing, tossing and dashing violently against their banks and sweeping away anything that comes in their way.

For the two brothers, it was an outing full of adventure and a recreational pastime as they followed the sage to his hermitage.

Verse no. 9:

तौ बलातिबलयोः प्रभावतो विद्ययोः पथि मुनिप्रदिष्टयोः।

मम्लतुर्न मणिकुट्टिमोचितौ मातृपार्श्वपरिवर्तिनाविव॥ ११-९

tau balātibalayoḥ prabhāvato vidyayoḥ pathi munipraḍiṣṭayoḥ |

mamlaturna maṇikuṭṭimocitau mātṛpārśvaparivartināviva || 11-9

11-9. On the way, sage Vishwamitra taught both the princes two powerful mystical abilities called Balaa and Ati-balaa¹ that could be activated by invoking certain Vedic hymns. By the virtue of these two magical abilities, both the princes were able to overcome hunger, thirst and tiredness of walking long distances¹. In effect, the two princes were feeling fresh, comfortable and rejuvenated as if they were enjoying playing around their mothers in their own palace that was embellished with jewels.

[Note--¹The Balaa and Ati-balaa are two great mystical abilities that can be activated by invoking certain mantras or hymns of the Vedas. They grant immense stamina, enhanced energy, great resilience, the ability to overcome physical discomfort and to easily cope with tension, anxiety and uncertainty.

This knowledge came in handy to Lord Ram and Laxman later on in life when they spent long fourteen years in the forest, and fought the ferocious war of Lanka against the demon king Ravana. They would never feel exhausted or tired, nor hungry and thirsty during long walks through desolate and wild land of the forest.]

Verse no. 10:

पूर्ववृत्तकथितैः पुराविदः सानुजः पितृसखस्य राघवः।

उह्यमान इव वाहनोचितः पादचारमपि न व्यभावयत्॥ ११-१०

pūrvavṛttakathitaiḥ purāvidaḥ sānujaḥ pitṛsakhasya rāghavaḥ |
uhyamāna iva vāhanocitaḥ pādacāramapi na vyabhāvayat || 11-10

11-10. Both Lord Ram and Laxman, who were accustomed to ride on elephants, horses, chariots and other kinds of vehicles whenever they moved out of their palace, however did not at all feel tired or weary while walking on foot with the learned sage Vishwamitra, who was a friend of their father king Dashrath and a very learned and wise sage, because he kept the brothers fully engaged and well entertained by telling them many interesting stories from the Purans and other ancient texts in which the sage was well-versed.

[Note--Like countless other boys of their age, the two princes loved stories, and hence they enthusiastically listened to the many fascinating stories that the wise sage kept narrating to them so as to keep their minds busy and occupied. Along with the two mystical abilities known as Balaa and Ati-balaa that helped to keep fatigue and weariness away from the two boys, these stories also served to keep Lord Ram and Laxman entertained and occupied while they walked alongside the great sage who showed the two boys the same love and affection that their own father Dashrath would have shown them. In effect, sage Vishwamitra was like their second father, with an additional benefit of being allowed to walk freely in the green countryside with him which would not have been possible had they gone somewhere with their father king Dashrath, because wherever the king went out anywhere he was invariably accompanied by his army. All these factors helped the two brothers thoroughly enjoy this journey of freedom and adventure.]

Verse no. 11:

तौ सरांसि रसवद्भिरम्बुभिः कूजितैः श्रुतिसुखैः पतत्रिणः।
वायवः सुरभिपुष्परेणुभिः छायाया च जलदाः सिषेविरे॥ ११-११

tau sarāṁsi rasavadbhirambubhiḥ kūjitaiḥ śrutisukhaiḥ patatrināḥ |
vāyavaḥ surabhipuṣṣpareṇubhiḥ chāyayā ca jaladāḥ siṣevire || 11-11

11-11. Mother Nature and all her manifestations did their bit to serve Lord Ram and Laxman to the best of their abilities. For instance, the lakes and ponds provided sweet water, the birds entertained their ears with their charming sounds and musical chirping, the wind sprayed pleasant fragrance of flowers all along the way to make the environment scented, and the clouds spread their cool shade over the two princes so that they don't have to face the harshness of the sun's rays as they walked alongside the sage.

Verse no. 12:

नाम्भसाम् कमलशोभिनाम् तथा शाखिनाम् च न परिश्रमच्छिदाम्।
दर्शनेन लघुना यथा तयोः प्रीतिमापुरुभयोस्तपस्विनः॥ ११-१२

nāmbhasām kamalāśobhinām tathā śākhinām ca na pariśramacchidām |
darśanena laghunā yathā tayohḥ prītimāpurubhayostapasvinah || 11-12

11-12. The sages, hermits and ascetics who lived in sundry hermitages on the way felt so highly delighted, fortunate and blessed when they saw the two brothers that they had never experienced such kind of feeling of exhilaration and satisfaction earlier although they lived in the midst of the inherently charming and comforting environment of Nature represented by the ponds and lakes where lotus flowers bloomed, as well as the green trees whose shades were so cool and comfortable that they were able to remove weariness of travellers.

Verse no. 13:

स्थाणुदग्धवपुषस्तपोवनम् प्राप्य दाशरथिरात्तकार्मुकः।
विग्रहेण मदनस्य चारुणा सोऽभवत्प्रतिनिधिर्न कर्मणा॥ ११-१३

sthāṇudagdhavapuṣastapovanam prāpya dāśarathirāttakārmukah |
vighraheṇa madanasya cāruṇā so'bhavatpratidinidhirna karmaṇā || 11-13

11-13. Lord Ram arrived at the hermitage where Lord Shiva had once burnt Kaamdeo (the patron deity of passion and lust) when the latter had tried to disturb meditation of Lord by his wanton acts of mischief¹.

Lord Ram's physical personality and charm were far more superior to what Kaamdeo possessed, but the Lord's deeds were completely opposite to that of the wanton acts of Kaamdeo, as the latter was driven by mischievous intention to tease Lord Shiva and disturb his penance, while Lord Ram was driven by the noble intent of helping sage Vishwamitra complete his penance and fire sacrifice that was being constantly defiled by the mischief of the demons².

[Note--¹This episode of Kaamdeo trying to disturb Lord Shiva's meditation, and the Lord becoming so annoyed with his mischief that he burnt Kaamdeo in his fire of wrath, has been described in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 82-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87.

²The underlying idea is very simple and straightforward. One's actions and deeds are judged by one's intentions, and the objective that one wishes to accomplish by such actions and deeds. Kaamdeo's intention was bad as he had tried to disturb Lord Shiva's meditation and penance, while Lord Ram's intention was good as he wanted to help the sages do their religious deeds without obstruction.]

Verse no. 14:

तौ सुकेतुसुतया खिलीकृते कौशिकादिवदितशापया पथि।

निन्यतुः स्थलनिवेशिताटनी लीलयैव धनुषी अधिज्यताम्॥ ११-१४

tau suketusutayā khilīkṛte kauśikādividitaśāpayā pathi |
ninyatuḥ sthalaniveśitātānī līlayaiva dhanuṣī adhijyatām || 11-14

11-14. On their way, Lord Ram and Laxman met the demoness named Tadka, daughter of Suketu. She was a terrible creature who had ruined the surrounding forest and made it a desolate place by her constant recklessness. Sage Vishwamitra had already told Lord Ram about her and the curse she had cast on the forest and its hermitages.

So therefore, as soon as she appeared menacingly before the two brothers, they put one end of their bows on the ground for support and slightly bend the bows so that they can slide the strings in from the other end to ready the bow¹.

[Note--¹The bow's string is either removed or loosened when it is not in use. So, the brothers had to put the string on it by slightly bending it, and for this purpose they rested one end of the bow on the ground, bent its shaft inwards, slid the string deftly in from the other end, and made it ready for use.]

Verse no. 15:

ज्यानिनादमथ गृहणती तयोः प्रादुरास बहुलक्षपाछविः।

ताडका चलकपालकुण्डला कालिकेव निबिडा बलाकिनी॥ ११-१५

jyāninādamatha gr̥hṇatī tayoh prādurāsa bahulakṣapāchaviḥ |
tāḍakā calakapālakuṇḍalā kālikeva nibiḍā balākinī || 11-15

11-15. No sooner the brothers had pulled the strings of their bows and released it with a mighty twang, than its sound so much excited the ferocious Tadka that she lunged furiously forward to block their way. Tadka had a dark complexion like that of moon-less night, and human skulls hanging from her ears like pendants attached to ear-rings shook wildly as she dashed forward and stood before the two brothers. With her dark complexion and white human skull-bones swaying from her ears she looked like a dark cloud in the midst of white cranes.

[Note--Here in this analogy, Tadka's dark body is likened to the dark cloud, and white human skull-bones swaying from her ears to white cranes that fly on the side of the cloud as it is viewed from the ground.]

Verse no. 16:

तीव्रवेगधुतमार्गवृक्षया प्रेतचीवरवसा स्वनोग्रया।
अभ्यभावि भरताग्रजस्तया वात्ययेव पितृकाननोत्थया ॥ ११-१६

tīvravegadhutamārgavṛkṣayā pretacīvaravasā svanograyā |
abhyabhāvi bharatāgrajastayā vātyayeveva pitṛkānanotthayā || 11-16

11-16. That fearful Tadka lunged violently at Lord Ram. The trees all around the roadside shook by the speed of her attack. She was attired in the shroud wrapped around evil spirits in grave yards, yelled with a ghostly voice, and had a form that resembled the blinding dust-storm that arises when some evil spirit visits the grave yard.

Verse no. 18:

उद्यतैकभुजयष्टिमायतीम् श्रोणिलम्बिपुरुषान्त्रमेखलाम्।
ताम् विलोक्य वनितावधे घृणाम् पत्रिणा सह मुमोच राघवः ॥ ११-१७

udyataikabhujaṣṭimāyatīm śroṇilambipuruṣāntramekhalām |
tām vilokya vanitāvadhe ghr̥ṇām patriṇā saha mumoca rāghavaḥ || 11-17

11-17. When Lord Ram saw that fearful Tadka coming towards him with raised arms which were like heavy battle-rams, and wearing a hip-girdle of human skulls, the Lord at once shot an arrow towards her while at the same time releasing his mind from the guilt of killing a woman¹.

[Note-¹Lord Ram, like the rest of his family members of the lineage of king Raghu, was a strict follower of Dharma, and killing a woman was not ordinarily a good and righteous thing to do for a noble knight. But the situation here was different: Tadka was a notorious

and evil creature who had killed numerous innocent human beings and relished eating their flesh. She flaunted her ferocity, cruelty and blood-thirstiness by wearing human skulls around her hip and as pendants from her earrings. She had been relentlessly tormenting sages and ascetics, destroying their hermitages, and defiling their sacrifices. She had killed innocent sages and other pious people and devoured them. So she had relinquished her right to be excused from being killed just because she was a woman. That is why Lord Ram did not have any guilt while slaying her.]

Verse no. 18:

यच्चकार विवरम् शिलाघने ताडकोरसि स रामसायकः।

अप्रविष्टविषयस्य रक्षसाम् द्वारतामगमदन्तकस्य तत्॥ ११-१८

yaccakāra vivaram śilāghane tāḍakorasi sa rāmasāyakaḥ |
apraviṣṭaviṣayasya rakṣasām dvāratāmagamadantakasya tat || 11-18

11-18. The powerful arrow shot by Lord Ram at Tadka penetrated her hard rock-like chest and pierced her heart, creating a hole like the opening of a cave on the side of a mountain. This hole was symbolically like a doorway opened by Lord Ram that would enable Yam, the god of death, to enter the country of the demon race (i.e. Lanka) which hitherto was out-of-bounds for him (out of fear of Ravana).

[Note--The slaying of Tadka by Lord Ram was the first direct confrontation between the demons and the Lord. It was a harbinger of what was to come. The hole in the chest of Tadka metaphorically opened the door by which the god of death would one day enter Lanka to eliminate the demons.]

Verse no. 19:

बाणभिन्नहृदया निपेतुषी सा स्वकाननभुवम् न केवलाम्।

विष्टपत्रयपराजयस्थिराम् रावणश्रियमपि व्यकम्पयत्॥ ११-१९

bāṇabhinnaḥṛdayā nipetuṣī sā svakānanabhuvam na kevalām |
viṣṭapatrayaparājayasthirām rāvaṇaśriyamapi vyakampayat || 11-19

11-19. The chest of Tadka was ruptured by the arrow shot by Lord Ram, and when her gigantic form fell down on earth it not only shook the ground of that forest but also made the deity representing Ravana's glory and his conquest of the three worlds, shiver too.

[Note--The patron deity of Lanka shook with fear at the grave prospect its chief patron now faced. The slaying of Tadka was a warning signal for the demon race that its time was up.]

Verse no. 20:

राममन्मथशरेण ताडिता दुःसहेन हृदये निशाचरी।

गन्धवद्रुधिरचन्दनोक्षिता जीवितेशवसतिम् जगाम सा॥ ११-२०

rāmamanmathaśareṇa tāḍitā duḥsahena hṛdaye niśācarī |

gandhavadrudhiracandanokṣitā jīviteśavasatim jagāma sā || 11-20

11-20. With her heart penetrated by the infallible arrow of Lord Ram, who was more charming than Kaamdeo, the patron deity of love, desire and beauty, the demoness Tadka bled profusely, with stinking blood flowing out of her wound and smearing her all over, as she dragged herself to the abode of Yam, the god of death and hell. It reminded one of a lovelorn lady putting aside all shame and self-respect as she smears herself with a scented paste of sandalwood and heads to the home of her lover (even though the lover may have already spurned her overtures and rebuked her).

[Note-- This verse is an excellent example of an oxymoron--which is a figure of speech or expression of an idea in which words or phrases of apparently opposite meaning are used together intentionally for effect. As is evident, the first half of the verse says that Tadka was smeared with blood that gave out a foul smell as she headed to the door of Yam, and the other half says that the lovelorn lady smears herself with a paste of sandalwood which has a pleasant scent as she goes to her lover's place.

When a woman falls in love with someone, she forgets all sense of decency, probity and propriety, as well as the infamy and scorn that would come to her from the society, when she decides to go to visit her lover even though the latter has already spurned her passionate gestures and had rebuked her. She would become so mad with burning passion that when she goes to her lover's place, she smears sandalwood scent all over her body to hide the stink of sweat and other odour emanating from her nervous and perspiring body, not bothering that this scent would invite unwarranted attention from strangers. Ordinarily, a woman would go to her lover's home quietly, without arousing suspicion and drawing unnecessary attention, but this particular lovelorn woman pays no heed to either her own reputation or that of her lover's while embarking on her misadventure.

In this verse, Tadka is compared to this reckless woman because she did not bother about the consequences of attacking Lord Ram.]

Verse no. 21:

नैरृतघ्नमथ मन्त्रवन्मुनेः प्रापदस्त्रमवदानतोषितात्।

ज्योतिरिन्धननिपाति भास्करात् सूर्यकान्त इव ताडकान्तकः॥ ११-२१

nairṛtaghnamatha mantravanmunehḥ prāpadastramavadānatoṣitāt |

jyotirindhananipāti bhāskarāt sūryakānta iva tāḍakāntakaḥ || 11-21

11-21. Lord Ram's slaying of Tadka mightily pleased sage Vishwamitra. He concluded that the Lord was indeed capable of eliminating the scourge of the demons, and was

therefore eligible to be taught the secret of certain mystical weapons that would empower him to do so.

With this decision, the learned sage imparted the esoteric knowledge of these powerful secret magical weapons to Lord Ram, along with the knowledge regarding how to use them, which would empower him with mystical powers and stupendous abilities that in turn would help him to carry out his mandate of freeing the world from the terror and mayhem unleashed by the demons.

Hence, Lord Ram acquired powerful magical weapons from sage Vishwamitra that would scorch the demons in the same way as a gem known as 'surya-kant mani' acquires the radiant energy from the sun to enable it to burn wood¹.

[Note--¹It is a known fact that a powerful magnifying glass can focus the energy of the sun onto a piece of paper or a dry leaf causing them to burn. In ancient times when there were no match-sticks, this 'surya-kant mani' was used to light the fire during a sacrifice.

In ordinary English, it is called the 'Star Ruby'. The sun is a star, and the ruby is related to a star as bright as the sun. It is a rare gem that exhibits the seven colours of sunlight when held under the sun, thereby mimicking the sun itself.]

Verse no. 22:

वामनाश्रमपदम् ततः परम् पावनम् श्रुतमृषेरुपेयिवान्।

उन्मनाः प्रथमजन्मचेष्टिता न्यस्मरन्नपि बभूव राघवः॥ ११-२२

vāmanāśramapadam tataḥ param pāvanam śrutamṛṣerupeyivān |
unmanāḥ prathamajanmaceṣṭitā nyasmarannapi babhūva rāghavaḥ || 11-22

11-22. Moving ahead, Lord Ram arrived at the sanctified hermitage of Lord Vaman (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu as a dwarf ascetic in some ancient time)¹. Even though sage Vishwamitra had already enlightened the Lord about its history, yet he could not fully recollect the events associated with this incarnation. Still, the very holy aura of the place made Lord Ram feel exhilarated.

[Note--Vaman (pronounced as Vaaman): This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

When the great King Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a 'Vaaman' or a dwarf,

and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth and the nether world with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali's own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali.

To wit, when Bali found that he was cornered as he could not fulfil the word given to a Brahmin, because the land for the third step was not available, he offered himself to be tied and enslaved by Lord Vaaman as a punishment for unfulfilled vow. So Lord Vaaman gracefully put his third step on Bali's head, which though appeared to be a punishment but was actually a blessing in disguise.

From then onwards, Lord Vishnu is also called 'Trivikram'—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps.

However, the Lord was very pleased with Bali's principles of keeping one's words even at the cost of allowing himself to be a slave of the Lord. So even though Lord Vaaman put his leg on Bali's head, thereby pushing him into the nether world, yet the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice that was done to Bali, a magnanimous and righteous King who had stood firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitment inspite of losing his crown and self-respect.

So therefore, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gate-keeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.]

Verse no. 23:

आससाद मुनिरात्मनस्ततः शिष्यवर्गपरिकल्पितार्हणम्।

बद्धपल्लवपुटाञ्जलिद्रुमम् दर्शनोन्मुखमृगम् तपोवनम्॥ ११-२३

āsasāda munirātmanastataḥ śiṣyavargaparikalpitārhaṇam |

baddhapallavapuṭaṅjalidrumam darśanonmukhamṛgam tapovanam || 11-23

11-23. From there (Vaman's hermitage), sage Vishwamitra arrived at his own hermitage where his disciples had readied all paraphernalia needed for worship and performance of the sacrifice which was kept pending till the sage returned (from Ayodhya). The trees stood with their leaves touching each other in close formation as if they were welcoming the sage and his guests in the same manner as one welcomes someone with folded hands and palms touching each other. Likewise, the deer were looking in the direction from which the sage arrived with the two brothers as if the animals were eager to welcome them too.

Verse no. 24:

तत्र दीक्षितमृषिम् ररक्षतुः विघ्नतो दशरथात्मजौ शरैः।

लोकमन्धतमसात्क्रमोदितौ रश्मिभिः शशिदिवाकराविव॥ ११-२४

tatra dīkṣitamṛṣim rarakṣatuḥ vighnato daśarathātmajau śaraiḥ |
lokamandhatamasātkramoditau raśmibhiḥ śaśidivākarāviva || 11-24

11-24. Just as the sun and the moon follow each other to spread light on earth with the help of their rays when they rise in the sky one after another sequentially (the former during the day, and the latter during the night), so likewise Lord Ram and Laxman, the two sons of king Dashrath, took turns to protect sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice from danger and getting defiled by the demons, using their powerful arrows to accomplish this task.

[Note--The two brothers took turns to guard sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice. Just as the sun lights up the earth with its rays during the day and the moon during the night in sequential manner, so did Lord Ram and Laxman took turns to stand on guard to protect the sage and his sacrifice.]

Verse no. 25:

वीक्ष्य वेदिमथ रक्तबिन्दुभिः बन्धुजीवपृथुभिः प्रदूषिताम्।

संभ्रमोऽभवदपोढकर्मणाम् ऋत्विजाम् च्युतविकङ्कतसुचाम्॥ ११-२५

vīkṣya vedimatha raktabindubhiḥ bandhujīvapṛthubhiḥ pradūṣitām |
sambhramo'bhavadaṇḍakarmaṇām ṛtvijām cyutavikaṅkatasucām || 11-25

11-25. As soon as the priests commenced the rituals of the fire sacrifice, they noticed that the walls of the sacrificial fire pit was defiled by large drops of thick blood as deeply red as the flower called the Mid-day flower (Pentapetes phoenicea) or the Jungle Geranium flower (Ixora coccinea)¹ that fell on it.

They were astonished at this development, and were left with no choice but to discontinue the ritual. So they put down the wooden spatula made of Vikankata or Khair wood (Acacia catechu or Senegalia catechu tree)² with which they were making offerings to the sacred fire.

[Note--¹The Mid-day flower is bright red in colour. It is also called the 'flame of the jungle'.

²The wood of the Khair tree is hard and durable. It is a tall deciduous tree that grows in wild forests in India and Southeast Asia. Its wood is used to make spatula to offer combustible materials to the fire pit because it can not only endure the heat of the fire but also does not break easily because of its hardness.]

Verse no. 26:

उन्मुखः सपदि लक्षमणाग्रजो बाणमाश्रयमुखात्समुद्धरन्।
रक्षसाम् बलमपश्यदम्बरे गृध्रपक्षपवनेरितध्वजम्॥ ११-२६

unmukhaḥ sapadi lakṣamaṇāgrajo bāṇamāśrayamukhātsamuddharan |
rakṣasām balamapaśyadambare gr̥dhrapakṣapavaneritadhvajam || 11-26

11-26. At that moment, Lord Ram took an arrow from his quiver and looked up into the sky. He observed that a large contingent of demon army was riding astride vultures who were flapping their wide wings as they flew overhead. The banners of the demons were swaying due to the movement in the air caused by this flapping.

{The vulture is a flesh eating bird, and its appearance is considered a bad omen.}

Verse no. 27:

तत्र यावधिपती मखद्विषाम् तौ शरव्यमकरोत्स नेतरान्।
किम् महोरगविसर्पिविक्रमो राजिलेषु गरुडः प्रवर्तते॥ ११-२७

tatra yāvadhīpatī makhadvīṣām tau śaravyamakarotsa netarān |
kim mahoragavisarpivikramo rājileṣu garuḍaḥ pravartate || 11-27

11-27. Lord Ram targeted the two chief demons who were leading the demon forces and were responsible for actively defiling the fire sacrifice. The Lord selected these two demon commanders to be targets of his arrows, while sparing others who were merely following their leader's orders.

For instance, when the celestial Eagle known as Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu) attacks serpents, it selects its targets carefully, attacking only large serpents who lead the group while sparing the smaller ones.

[Note--In this analogy, the example of Garud is cited to stress that great warriors focus their attention only on senior commanders of the opposite army, for if these seniors are subdued then the rest of the ordinary soldiers would surrender with ease. There is no point in wasting time and energy in trying to crush ordinary soldiers who are merely servants and are forced to obey the orders of their chiefs.

Similarly here, Lord Ram targeted only the two chief demons who the Lord observed were leading the army and were aggressively defiling the fire sacrifice by dropping blood from the sky.]

Verse no. 28:

सोऽस्त्रमुग्रजवमस्त्रकोविदः संदधे धनुषि वायुदैवतम्।
तेन शैलगुरुमप्यपातयत् पाण्डुपत्रमिव ताडकासुतम्॥ ११-२८

so'stramugrajavamastrakovidah saṁdadhe dhanuṣi vāyudaivatam |
tena śailagurumapyapātayat pāṇḍupatramiva tāḍakāsutam || 11-28

11-28. Lord Ram, who was an expert archer and skilled in the use of powerful weapons of various denominations, mounted a powerful arrow called 'Vayavystra', which had the velocity and the strength of the wind-god, on his bow, and shot it at the demon Marich, the son of Tadka, who was as heavy as a mountain. When this arrow struck Marich, the latter was flung far away just like a dry leaf that is swept away during a violent storm.

{Though Marich had a bulky body and his weight was no less than that of a mountain, yet when Lord Ram's weapon struck him he was flown away to a far-away land just like a dry leaf is swept away during a violent storm.}

Verse no. 29:

यः सुबाहुरिति राक्षसोऽपरः तत्र तत्र विसर्प मायया।
तम् क्षुरप्रशकलीकृतम् कृती पत्रिणाम् व्यभजदाश्रमाद्बहिः॥ ११-२९

yaḥ subāhuriti rākṣaso'paraḥ tatra tatra visasarpa māyayā |
tam kṣurapraśakalīkṛtam kṛtī patriṇām vyabhajadāśramādbahiḥ || 11-29

11-29. Lord Ram then targeted the second demon commander named Subahu who was moving stealthily in the sky and trying to avoid being targeted by the Lord after he saw the fate of Marich. But Lord Ram shot an arrow that hit Subahu directly and flung the demon outside the precincts of the hermitage where the sages were conducting the fire sacrifice.

As soon as Subahu fell down dead and his body splintered into many pieces, birds of prey, such as vultures and hawks, descended on these pieces immediately in droves, and soon gobbled them all up.

Verse no. 30:

इत्यपास्तमखविघ्नयोस्तयोः सांयुगीनमभिनन्द्य विक्रमम्।
ऋत्विजः कुलपतेर्यथाक्रमम् वाग्यतस्य निरवर्तयन्क्रियाः॥ ११-३०

ityapāstamakhavighnayostayoḥ sāmyugīnamabhinandya vikramam |
ṛtvijaḥ kulapateryathākramam vāgyatasya niravartayankriyāḥ || 11-30

11-30. The priests who were conducting the fire sacrifice on behalf of sage Vishwamitra, who himself was obliged to remain silent during the course of the rituals, lavishly praised the two brothers for their valour and skills by the help of which they could resume and finally complete the sacrifice successfully.

[Note--So, what happened to the rest of the demon army? By what is mentioned in verse no. 27 herein above, it is clear that since Lord Ram targeted only the two chief

commanders of the demon army, i.e. Marich and Subahu, so as soon as they were done away with, the rest of the demon soldiers fled in terror.]

Verse no. 31:

तौ प्रणामचलकाकपक्षकौ भ्रातराववभृथाप्लुतो मुनिः।
आशिषामनुपदं समस्पृशत् दर्भपाटलतलेन पाणिना॥ ११-३१॥

tau praṇāmacalakākapakṣakau bhrātarāvavabhrthāpluto muniḥ |
āśiṣāmanupadaṁ samaspr̥śat darbhapāṭalatalena pāṇinā || 11-31

11-31. When the fire sacrifice was over, sage Vishwamitra performed his final oblations and took his bath. After that, the exhilarated sage was so happy and gratified that he liberally blessed Lord Ram and Laxman, whose lock of hairs dangled loosely as they bowed reverentially before the sage while receiving his blessings.

The sage was still wearing on his fingers a ring made of darbha grass¹ that is worn by the patron who sits to do the fire sacrifice as he was blessing the two brothers by simultaneously putting the palms of his hands respectively on the heads of the brothers.

[Note--¹The darbha grass is also known as Kusha grass. In common English, it is known as Halfa grass, Big Cordgrass, or Salt reed grass. It is a perennial reed of the grass family that is used during religious rituals as it is considered pure. It has long slender stems and bears a tuft at its end resembling a priest who sports a tuft on his head while doing a religious ritual. Its botanical name is 'Desmostachya bipinnata'.]

Verse no. 32:

तम् न्यमन्त्रयत संभृतराजः मैथिलः स मिथिलाम् व्रजन्वशी।
राघवावपि निनाय बिभ्रतौ तद्धनुःश्रवणजम् कुतूहलम्॥ ११-३२

tam nyamantrayata sambhṛtakratuḥ maithilāḥ sa mithilām vrajanvaśī |
rāghavāvapi nināya bibhratau taddhanuḥśravaṇajam kutūhalam || 11-32

11-32. Meanwhile, the great King of Mithila, known by the name of Janak, was organising a 'bow ceremony' with the objective of marrying his daughter Sita¹. He had invited great sages to attend it. He had, in the process, also sent an invitation to sage Vishwamitra, who was a senior sage famed for his wisdom, self-restraint and self-realisation, to come.

When the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, heard about this 'bow ceremony' from the sage, they showed great interest in it (just like boys of their age are always eager to witness spectacles and ceremonies with the aim of enjoying them).

Hence, when the sage was going to attend this ceremony, he took the two brothers along with him.

{Sage Vishwamitra had, by this time, developed a special bond of fatherly love for the two brothers. He began to love them so much that he always wanted them by his side as long as it was possible. Hence, when he observed that these two young boys were enthusiastic in joining him to enjoy a new adventure, the sage was mightily pleased and willingly took them along.}

[Note--¹King Janak was organising this 'bow ceremony' for the marriage of his daughter Sita. This bow was very large, heavy and stiff. So the king had set a condition that any great warrior who could lift and string the bow would become eligible to marry her.]

Verse no. 33:

तैः शिवेषु वसतिर्गताध्वभिः सायमाश्रमतनुष्वगृह्यत।
येषु दीर्घतपसः परिग्रहो वासवक्षणकलत्रताम् ययौ॥ ११-३३

taiḥ śiveṣu vasatirgatādhvabhiḥ sāyamāśramatanuṣvagrhyata |
yeṣu dīrghatapasaḥ parigraho vāsavakṣaṇakalatratām yayau || 11-33

11-33. On their way to Janakpur, evening arrived. So they (sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman) decided to rest for the night under the shade of beautiful trees at a hermitage where once a very righteous sage Gautam's wife named Ahilya was cheated by Indra (the lustful king of gods) for a short while to establish an alliance with her¹.

[Note--¹The story of Ahilya is briefly as follows: She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife. Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world know about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's

body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken-pox.

The story of Ahilya's liberation from her horrifying curse is this: When Lord Ram, accompanied by his brother Laxman, was on his way to Janakpur with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow-breaking ceremony where later on he would marry Janka's daughter Sita, the Lord saw a rock or a boulder, perhaps shaped like a lady, lying alone and forlorn in an abandoned hermitage. This aroused the Lord's curiosity. When he enquired about it, the sage told him the story of Ahilya and how she became a stone. The sage asked Lords Ram to be gracious upon her and free her from her torments by removing the curse by touching her with the dust of his holy feet. As soon as the Lord touched that rock with his foot, Ahilya was revived. She had tears rolling down her eyes, and with a bowed head and heart overflowing with gratitude and joy she offered her prayers and obeisance to Lord Ram. Then she went back to heaven to be reunited with her husband, sage Gautam.

This story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60; (c) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 39-40; (d) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-61; and (e) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, from Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33—to Sarga/Canto 49, verse nos. 1-21.]

Verse no. 34:

प्रत्यपद्यत चिराय यत्पुनश्चारु गौतमवधूः शिलामयी।

स्वम् वपुः स किल किल्बिषच्छिदाम् रामपादरजसामनुग्रहः॥ ११-३४

pratyapadyata cirāya yatpuna ścāru gautamavadhūḥ śilāmayī |
svam vapuḥ sa kila kilbiṣacchidām rāmapādarajasāmanugrahaḥ || 11-34

11-34. Ahilya, who had turned into a stone due to her husband sage Gautam's curse, now got back, after a long time, her beautiful original form of a charming lady. It was indeed the result of the sacred dust of Lord Ram's feet.

[Note--Though Ahilya was innocent and felt prey to deceit, yet her husband, sage Gautam, became so furious that he cursed her to become a stone. When he realised that he has punished Ahilya much more than what she deserved, and when she pleaded with him for some reprieve, the sage told her that later on when Lord Vishnu, in his incarnation as Lord Ram, would come to this hermitage and touches her stone-like body with his toes, she would be absolved of her sin, and regain her life and original form.]

Verse no. 35:

राघवान्वितमुपस्थितम् मुनिम् तम् निशम्य जनको जनेश्वरः।

अर्थकामसहितम् सपर्यया देहबद्धमिव धर्ममभ्यगात्॥ ११-३५

rāghavānvitamupasthitam munim tam niśamya janako janeśvaraḥ |
arthakāmasahitam saparyayā dehabaddhamiva dharmamabhyagāt || 11-35

11-35. When king Janak heard that the great sage Vishwamitra has arrived with Lord Ram and Laxman to visit him, he arranged all paraphernalia of worship to go and welcome them. When the king saw them he felt so honoured as if a personified form of Dharma has himself come to him along with its two prime rewards called Artha (wealth, prosperity) and Kaam (fulfilment of all desires).

[Note--In this analogy, sage Vishwamitra is compared with Dharma, and Lord Ram and Laxman with Artha and Kaam. The revered sage was venerable, righteous, and of high spiritual stature; he was like Dharma personified. Lord Ram and Laxman were like the rewards one gets by following the principles of Dharma diligently and honestly. Dharma itself is a way of life characterised by good virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, honesty, truthfulness, piety and humility, as well as nobility of thought and conduct. When a person leads such a life, he would be rewarded with prosperity and fulfilment of wishes. What would a person want more in this world if he has immense wealth and all his desires are fulfilled?

When this happens, it is obvious that a person would consider himself very fortunate, privileged and blessed. So likewise, to have a sage of Vishwamitra's stature as his guest was a great moment of honour for king Janak. To this was added the joy he got by meeting the two charming princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, whose mere presence captivated the mind and the heart of all who beheld them. Hence, the joy of Janak knew no bounds.]

Verse no. 36:

तौ विदेहनगरीनिवासिनाम् गाम् गताविव दिवः पुनर्वसू।
मन्यते स्म पिबताम् विलोचनैः पक्ष्मपातमपि वञ्चनाम् मनः॥ ११-३६

tau videhanagarīnivāsinām gām gatāviva divaḥ punarvasū |
manyate sma pibatām vilocanaiḥ pakṣmapātamapi vañcanām manaḥ || 11-36

11-36. The two princes looked so charming and beautiful as if the two stars called Punarvasu¹ had descended on the earth from their abode in the sky. The citizens of Janakpur were so mesmerised by their eye-catching beauty that they feasted on this sight, and stared at them without blinking so as not to miss even a moment without seeing them. {The citizens were so dazed at the beauty and charm of Lord Ram and Laxman that they forgot to blink. Their eyes literally froze in their sockets because even a momentary blink would have stolen a precious moment from the thorough joy that the citizens got by seeing Lord Ram and Laxman; blinking the eye would have deprived them of this joy.}

[Note--¹The Punarvasu star: It is a 'nakshatra' or a lunar mansion in Vedic astrology. It spans from 20⁰.00' Gemini to 3⁰.20' Cancer. It is associated with the virtues of renewal, rejuvenation, restoration, abundance and resilience. All these qualities were represented

by Lord Ram and Laxman. This nakshatra is metaphorically represented by a quiver of arrows, once again symbolising the two brothers who too held quivers of arrows.

Punurvasu star is ruled by Jupiter, the largest planet and called Brihaspati in Vedic astrology. Since the great sage Vishwamitra, who symbolically represented Brishpati, the priest of the gods in heaven, was the guardian of the two princes on earth at present, hence this metaphor suits in well.]

Verse no. 37:

यूपवत्यवसिते क्रियाविधौ कालवित्कुशिकवंशवर्धनः।

राममिष्वसनदर्शनोत्सुकम् मैथिलाय कथयांबभूव सः॥ ११-३७

yūpavatyaivasite kriyāvidhau kālavitkuśikavaṁśavardhanaḥ |
rāmamiṣvasanadarśanotsukam maithilāya kathayāmbabhūva saḥ || 11-37

11-37. When all formalities regarding the commencement of the 'bow ceremony' were completed, sage Vishwamitra, who had raised the statue of the family of the great sage Kaushik to which he belonged, and who understood which time was appropriate to start an action, told king Janak that Lord Ram and Laxman wished to see that bow.

Verse no. 38:

तस्य वीक्ष्य ललितम् वपुः शिशोः पार्थिवः प्रथितवंशजन्मनः।

स्वम् विचिन्त्य च धनुर्दुरानमम् पीडितो दुहितृशुल्कसंस्थया॥ ११-३८

tasya vīkṣya lalitam vapuḥ śiśoḥ pāṛthivaḥ prathitavaṁśajanmanaḥ |
svam vicintya ca dhanurdurānamam pīḍito duhitṛśulkaśasthaya || 11-38

11-38. When king Janak saw the lovely and innocently boyish charm of Lord Ram, and thought of the bow at the center of the 'bow ceremony', and regretted very much because the bow was very huge, hard and heavy to lift. He regretted at his decision to organise the bow ceremony where his daughter Sita was to wed any mighty warrior who would be strong and powerful enough to able to lift and string the bow, as he now doubted if there was anyone competent enough to do so¹.

[Note--¹King Janak had declared his intention that he would marry his daughter Sita to any powerful warrior who could lift and string this bow. Primarily, king Janak had thought of this scheme to ensure that his daughter is married to the most powerful and the strongest warrior in the world. But after making his decision public, he had second thoughts. He doubted if there was any such competent suitor. Further, this bow belonged to Lord Shiva and was kept in his family's custody for safe-keeping. So on the face of it too it would be wrong to bet Sita's fate on it. But now it was too late.

Janak became pensive; he regretted his decision. He brooded over the thought that had he known Lord Ram earlier, he would have straightaway married Sita to him. But what could be done now.]

Verse no. 39:

अब्रवीच्च भगवन्मतङ्गजैर्यद्बृहद्भिरपि कर्म दुष्करम्।
तत्र नाहमनुमन्तुमुत्सहे मोघवृत्ति कलभस्य चेष्टितम्॥ ११-३९

abravicca bhagavanmataṅgajairyadbṛhadbhirapi karma duṣkaram |
tatra nāhamanumantumutsahe moghavṛtti kalabhasya ceṣṭitam || 11-39

11-39. With his mind in a dilemma, king Janak said to sage Vishwamitra: "Oh Lord! A task that cannot be accomplished even by muscular mature elephants, I don't think a baby elephant would be able to do it, for it would be an exercise in futility.

[Note--What king Janak meant here is that when famous warrior kings and princes find it impossible to move the bow even by a fraction of an inch, it would be improper to ask these boys to lift and string it. It will be humiliating for the two young princes.]

Verse no. 40:

हेपिता हि बहवो नरेश्वरास्तेन तात धनुषा धनुर्भृतः।
ज्यानिघातकठिनत्वचो भुजान् स्वान्विधूय धिगिति प्रतस्थिरे॥ ११-४०

hrepitā hi bahavo nareśvarāstena tāta dhanuṣā dhanurbhṛtaḥ |
jyānighātakathinatvaco bhujān svānvidhūya dhigiti pratasthire || 11-40

11-40. Oh Lord! This bow has already put to shame the pride and honour of the mightiest of warriors on earth who had professed their mastery with the bow, as none could as much as shift this bow from its bed, let alone lifting and stringing it. They went away cursing their own arms to have failed them and subjected them to such abject humiliation."

[Note--Even a causal reading of this verse would make it obvious that the bow ceremony was already underway and had been going on for sometime before sage Vishwamitra asked king Janak to let Lord Ram see it and try his hands at it.]

Verse no. 41:

प्रत्युवाच तमृषिर्निश्म्यताम् सारतोऽयमथवा गिरा कृतम्।
चाप एव भवतो भविष्यति व्यक्तशक्तिरशनिर्गिराविव॥ ११-४१

pratyuvāca tamṛṣirniśamyatām sārato'yamathavā girā kṛtam |
cāpa eva bhavato bhaviṣyati vyaktaśaktiraśanirgirāviva || 11-41

11-41. Hearing king Janak's reservations, sage Vishwamitra said to him: "Oh king Janak! Let me brief you about his (Lord Ram's) stupendous strength and remarkable abilities by giving you an example. Just as the effectiveness and strength of the Vajra (the powerful weapon of Indra; the thunderbolt) is manifested and becomes evident when it is tested against the rocks on the side of a mountain, so likewise Lord Ram's abilities and strength would become clear to you when he is tested against the might of this formidable bow that has resolutely repulsed all the great warriors you talk about.

{Oh King! When the thunderbolt strikes on the sides of a mountain, it cracks the rocks and sends them tumbling down. Similarly, have no doubt that the bow would stand no chance to offer resistance to the might of Lord Ram's arms, and I say this with conviction as I have been a witness of his abilities and strength¹.}

[Note--¹Sage Vishwamitra had personally witnessed Lord Ram eliminating the ferocious demons single-handedly. The sage had seen the Lord slaying Tadka and Subahu, and flinging Marich far away. The sage was famous for his spiritual achievements, and if he was confident that some other king or prince could help him in protecting his fire sacrifice and eliminating the demons, he surely would have approached them, instead of exposing these two little boys to this grave danger. Those princes and kings whom he approached would have been too glad to oblige the sage for they would get his blessings in return, which would enhance their status in the community of kings and princes of the time, and made them famous for all times to come for their valour, strength and courage.

But king Janak did not know of these remarkable feats of Lord Ram. So he had his doubts. On the contrary, sage Vishwamitra had first-hand knowledge of Lord Ram's abilities, so he was confident.]

Verse no. 42:

एवमाप्तवचनात्स पौरुषम् काकपक्षकधरेऽपि राघवे।
श्रद्धां त्रिदशगोपमात्रके दाहशक्तिमिव कृष्णवर्त्मनि॥ ११-४२

evamāptavacanātsa pauruṣam kākapakṣakadhare'pi rāghave |
śraddadhe tridaśagopamātrake dāhaśaktimiva kṛṣṇavartmani || 11-42

11-42. King Janak thought over the matter. He came to the conclusion that sage Vishwamitra, being a speaker of truth and possessing great spiritual prowess, must certainly have some reason for making such assurances regarding Lord Ram. The king had great faith in the sage, and he thought that one must not judge someone's abilities and powers and skills by his physical appearances or age alone as it may lead to erroneous conclusions. For just like a tiny spark from the fire, which is no larger than an insect, has the ability to set entire forests ablaze (i.e. cause wild-fires), so it is likewise possible that Lord Ram, who is boyish in his appearance and still sports a lock of jet-black hairs

dangling from the sides of his head like any young boy of his age, indeed possesses the prowess, the might and the valour needed to lift and string the formidable bow.

{Who knows, wondered the king. So what is the harm in giving Lord Ram a chance. If things go well, then it would be a record of sorts, and if things don't turn right then still no great harm would come as Lord Ram was just a young boy and he could be excused for trying his hand at a new adventure that would at least give him experience to tackle competitions in future. Besides this, the king had to obey sage Vishwamitra, as refusal was not an option.}

Verse no. 43:

व्यादिदेश गणशोऽथ पार्श्वगान् कार्मुकाभिहरणाय मैथिलः।

तैजसस्य धनुषः प्रवृत्तये तोयदानिव सहस्रलोचनः॥ ११-४३

vyādideśa gaṇaśo'tha pārs'vagān karmukābhiharaṇāya maithilāḥ |
taijasasya dhanuṣaḥ pravṛttaye toyadāniva sahasralocanaḥ || 11-43

11-43. After that, king Janak of Mithila sent large numbers of his servants to bring the mighty bow of Lord Shiva, just as Indra, the lord of the clouds, sends large banks of rain-bearing dark clouds to form a canvas against which the multicoloured gigantic celestial bow (i.e. the 'rain-bow') is seen in the sky.

[Note--The rain-bow has seven colours, and it spans the vast expanse of the sky, sitting across it like a gigantic arched gateway to heaven. It is symbolically the bow of Indra as the latter is the lord of the clouds and rain as well as of heaven. The rain-bow is formed against a backdrop of thick banks of dark clouds. Similarly, the bow which was at the center of this ceremony was also huge, and its length spanned across a vast arena from one end to another just like the rain-bow that spans across a wide swathe of the sky, stretching from one end of the horizon to the other end.

And, just as the rain-bow is a symbolic gateway to heaven, so was the bow of king Janak as it would open the doors of good luck and immense fame for the person who successfully passed its test.]

Verse no. 44:

तत्प्रसुप्तभुजगेन्द्रभीषणम् वीक्ष्य दाशरथिराददे धनुः।

विद्रुतक्रतुमृगानुसारिणम् येन बाणमसृजत्वृषध्वजः॥ ११-४४

tatprasuptabhujagendrabhīṣaṇam vīkṣya dāśarathirādade dhanuḥ |
vidrutakratumṛgānusāriṇam yena bāṇamasṛjatvṛṣadhvajāḥ || 11-44

11-44. When the bow was brought there, it looked like a giant serpent (or a huge cobra) was asleep. Lord Ram easily lifted that bow which, in some ancient time, Lord Shiva had

used to shoot an arrow that pursued the deity of a fire sacrifice, known as the 'Yagya Devta', who was trying to escape or flee away by assuming the form of a deer.

[Note--In some ancient time, a fire sacrifice was being performed in which the Yagya Devta, the deity associated with the sacrifice, too was present in the form of a deer. To test the authenticity of this deer as well as its integrity as the presiding deity of the sacrifice, Brahma, the creator, assumed the form of a stag. The female deer got charmed by the stag and ran away from the arena of the sacred rituals in pursuit of the stag, forgetting its duty to be present there to accept the offerings and see it being completed successfully. This behaviour of the deity of the fire sacrifice angered Lord Shiva, who shot an arrow at this deer to punish it for its misdeeds. The bow used for this was the bow that was now at the center of the 'bow ceremony' held by king Janak.

This bow of Lord Shiva was called 'Pinak (pronounced Pinaak)'. Shiva was an ascetic, and this violent outburst of anger made him so disgusted that he did not want to keep it with him as it would remind him of this sad event. So he gifted it to Janak's family for keep-sake.]

Verse no. 45:

आततज्यमकरोत्स संसदा विस्मयस्तिमितनेत्रमीक्षितः।

शैलसारमपि नातियत्नतः पुष्पचापमिव पेशलम् स्मरः॥ ११-४५

ātatajyamakarotsa saṁsadā vismayastimitanetrāmīkṣitaḥ |

śailasāramapi nātiyatnataḥ puṣpacāpamiva peśalam smaraḥ || 11-45

11-45. While all the courtiers present at the sight gazed wide-eyed in amazement at Lord Ram, he effortlessly lifted the mighty bow and strung it in the same easy way as Kaamdeo, the patron god of love and passion, symbolically swiftly lifts his bow, which is as soft as flowers, and strings it to shoot an arrow of desire at the target of his passion and lust.

[Note--Kaamdeo represents the power of lust, passion and desire that is so powerful that it can overcome all sense of prudence and good manners when it strikes a person, no matter how powerful and self-controlled he might be. Kaamdeo's ability at this is demonstrated when he had shot an arrow at Lord Shiva to wake him from his meditation, and motivate the Lord to marry Parvati. This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 75-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87.]

Verse no. 46:

भज्यमानमतिमात्रकर्षणात् तेन वज्रपरुषस्वनम् धनुः।

भार्गवाय दृढमन्यवे पुनः क्षत्रमुद्यतमिव न्यवेदयत्॥ ११-४६

bhājyamānamatimātrakarṣaṇāt tena vajraparuṣasvanam dhanuḥ |
bhārgavāya dr̥ḍhamanyave punaḥ kṣatramudyatamiva nyavedayat || 11-46

11-46. Lord Ram stringed the bow and pulled the string so far back that the bow broke with a snap in the middle, making a mighty roar as if the Vajra (thunder-bolt) had struck its target with a thunderous sound. The sound of the bow breaking was so loud that it was heard by sage Parashuram in his hermitage, alerting him that the might of the Kshatriya race, which he had crushed a number of times, was once again on the ascendance.

[Note--The story goes that sage Parashuram had vanquished the warrior class, known as the Kshatriya race, a number of times--a fact he himself had boasted of as mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 272. With the breaking of the powerful bow of Lord Shiva by Lord Ram, who belonged to the Kshatriya race, it was a signal for sage Parashuram that this race was once again rising.]

Verse no. 47:

दृष्टसारमथ रुद्रकार्मुके वीर्यशुल्कमभिनन्द्य मैथिलः।
राघवाय तनयामयोजिजाम् रूपिणीम् श्रियमिव न्यवेदयत्॥ ११-४७

dr̥ṣṭasāramatha rudrakārmuke vīryaśulkamabhinandya maithilaḥ |
rāghavāya tanayāmayonijām rūpiṇīm śriyamiva nyavedayat || 11-47

11-47. Then, when the king of Mithila, i.e. king Janak, saw that Lord Ram has indeed broken the bow to show his valour and strength that fulfilled the king's condition for marrying his daughter, he summoned Sita, who was born from the womb of mother earth¹, and cheerfully gave her in marriage to Lord Ram as if he was symbolically giving goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity, to Lord Ram who represented Lord Vishnu, the heavenly Lord of Laxmi.

[Note--¹Sita: She was the divine consort of Lord Ram. If Ram was an incarnate Vishnu then Sita was goddess Laxmi, the heavenly consort of Vishnu and the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity. If Ram is to be treated as a personified form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm then Sita is Maya (delusion creating powers of Brahm) personified. The Sita Upanishad is the 9th Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, and it describes the metaphysical importance of Sita. She was the daughter of king Janak. She is also known as 'Vaidehi' meaning the daughter of Videha, another name of Janak as well as the kingdom where he ruled.

Regarding the story of the birth of Sita, it is narrated in Adbhut Ramayan, Canto 8, verse nos. 36-44. This Ramayan is purported to have been written by sage Valmiki. Sita's father Janak had no heirs. He was advised by sages to perform a fire-sacrifice. While the ground was being prepared for the altar of the sacred fire, the head of the plough got stuck into a pot buried in the ground. When it was taken out, it was discovered that it contained an infant girl. In the beginning the king thought that this was a bad

omen, but his royal priest and other sages who had assembled there advised him that this girl would give him immense fame and a chance to meet the Supreme Lord. Since this lovely girl was discovered when the ploughshare got stuck in the ground, she was named 'Sita'—meaning precisely this, the 'tip or edge of the ploughshare'.

It is also narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, in its Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-to-75.

Again, since Sita was born from the Mother Earth, she was also regarded as the daughter of Prithivi (earth). Earth is regarded as the foot of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-encompassing vast form of the Supreme Being. This is why Laxmi, whose incarnation was Sita, is invariably depicted to be seated near the feet of Lord Vishnu, another name of the Viraat Purush. It was this Lord Vishnu who had manifested himself as Lord Ram of Ayodhya to whom Sita was married. This is natural to expect because Laxmi is the eternal divine consort of Vishnu.

Prayers for Sita are included in Tulsidas' wonderful book of hymns known as 'Vinai Patrika', as verse nos. 41-42.]

Verse no. 48:

मैथिलः सपदि सत्यसंगरो राघवाय तनयामयोनिजाम्।

संनिधौ द्युतिमतस्तपोनिधे रग्निसाक्षिक इवातिसृष्टवान्॥ ११-४८

maithilah sapadi satyasamgaro raghavāya tanayāmayonijām |
samnidhau dyutimatastaponidhe ragnisākṣika ivātisṛṣṭavān || 11-48

11-48. King Janak, who was renowned for his trustworthiness and was a strict keeper of his promises, gave his daughter Sita to Lord Ram in marriage with the illustrious and venerated sage Vishwamitra, who had the same purity as possessed by the fire, as a witness to this wedding ritual in the same way as one makes the sacred fire a witness during a formal marriage ceremony.

[Note--King Janak did not want to waste time by waiting till the formality of an elaborate marriage ceremony could be arranged. He was very eager to wed his loving daughter to Lord Ram who had charmed the king much and made him eager to somehow marry his daughter with the Lord as outlined earlier in verse no. 38.

Once the symbolic marriage was solemnised with sage Vishwamitra as a witness, king Janak felt relieved, as the honourable sage standing witness to this relationship was as sacred and sanctified as it would be with the holy fire as a witness.

Another factor that played in the mind of king Janak in making haste to formalise the marriage of his daughter with Lord Ram was the possibility of defeated kings forming an alliance to launch an attack to create an obstacle to block Lord Ram's marriage with Sita as an act of vengeance ignited by jealousy and humiliation that they had faced. The king knew that with sage Vishwamitra firmly on his side, no king would ever be stupid enough to commit such an error out of fear of inviting the sage's wrath.]

Verse no. 49:

प्राहिणोच्च महितम् महाद्युतिः कोसलाधिपतये पुरोधसम्।
भृत्यभावि दुहितुः परिग्रहात् दिश्यताम् कुलमिदम् निमेरिति॥ ११-४९

prāhiṇocca mahitam mahādyutiḥ kosalādhīpataye purodhasam |
bhṛtyabhāvi duhituḥ parigrahātdīśyatām kulamidam nimeriti || 11-49

11-49. The illustrious king Janak summoned his royal priest named Shatanand and sent him as his messenger to the great king Dashrath with a polite request that the latter accept Sita as his daughter-in-law to grant the family of Nimi (to which Janak belonged) the honour of having a privileged relationship with the great dynasty to which king Dashrath belonged.

The message read: "Oh great king! Please accept my respects. I beg you to kindly be gracious upon me to accept my daughter Sita as your daughter-in-law. Please give me this honour to serve you and your great family by granting me your grace in the same way as you show kindness towards your servants."

Verse no. 50:

अन्वियेष सदृशीम् स च स्नुषाम् प्राप चैनमनुकूलवाग्दिवजः।
सद्य एव सुकृताम् हि पच्यते कल्पवृक्षफलधर्मि काङ्क्षितम्॥ ११-५०

anviyeṣa sadṛśīm sa ca snuṣām prāpa cainamanukūlavāgdvijah |
sadya eva sukṛtām hi pacyate kalpavṛkṣaphaladharmi kāṅkṣitam || 11-50

11-50. Meanwhile, king Dashrath was contemplating about having an honourable daughter-in-law in the family (i.e. he was thinking of marrying his sons one-by-one as they had become adults). It was during such moments of contemplation that news came that king Janak's royal priest Shatanand has come with a message from his patron that would fulfil king Dashrath's wish.

This was indeed in line with the maxim that those who are good get good rewards and have their wishes fulfilled just like the Kalpa Tree, the all wish-fulfilling tree of heaven, ensures that the wishes of those who are meritorious, righteous, truthful and honourable are fulfilled.

Verse no. 51:

तस्य कल्पितपुरस्क्रियाविधेः शुश्रुवान्वचनमग्रजन्मनः।
उच्चचाल बलभित्सखो वशी सैन्यरेणुमुषितार्कदीधितिः॥ ११-५१

tasya kalpitapuraskriyāvidheḥ śuśruvānvacanamagrajanmanah |
uccacāla balabhitsakho vaśī sainyareṇumuṣitārkadīdhitih || 11-51

11-51. King Dashrath, who was a friend of Indra, the king of heaven, warmly welcomed king Janak's messenger Shatanand. When he heard the Brahmin's (i.e. Shatanand's) message on behalf of king Janak, the thrill and exhilaration of king Dashrath knew no bounds (because this message fulfilled his wish regarding which he was contemplating for a long time).

The king made all preparations and departed for Janak's place with Shatanand. He was accompanied by such a huge marriage party and an equally huge army that the dust kicked up by their march formed such a dense cloud that it hid the sun from view.

Verse no. 52:

**आससाद मिथिलाम् स वेष्टयन् पीडितोपवनपादपाम् बलैः।
प्रीतिरोधमसहिष्ट सा पुरी स्त्रीव कान्तपरिभोगमायतम्॥ ११-५२**

āsasāda mithilām sa veṣṭayan pīditopavanapādapām balaiḥ |
prītirodhamasahiṣṭa sā purī strīva kāntaparibhogamāyatam || 11-52

11-52. King Dashrath reached the outskirts of Mithila (Janakpur). The trees and gardens surrounding the peaceful city were scarred and bruised by the arrival of such a huge and excited army when it camped all around its outskirts. Though it looked like a seize from a foreign army, yet it was not a hostile but a friendly army led by its king Dashrath who had come at the invitation of their own king Janak.

So therefore, instead of feeling annoyed, the citizens rejoiced at their arrival and enjoyed interacting with them just like a lady enjoys the roughness of her lover just before they have intercourse as she feels pleased with those gestures which are intended to arouse her passions rather than actually harming her in any way.

[Note--We must always keep in mind that Kalidas was a poet par-excellence who wrote with a liberal mind and a flourish of the pen, and he had no reservations in describing explicit scenes or using metaphors and analogies that often times blurred the boundary between the exotica and the erotica. Nonetheless, the beauty of Kalidas' compositions are unmatched, and his ability to use metaphors and analogies so fluently in virtually every verse is what sets him apart from other poets, and makes his writing both fascinating and exquisite.]

Verse no. 53:

**तौ समेत्य समये स्थितावुभौ भूपती वरुणवासवोपमौ।
कन्यकातनयकौतुकक्रियाम् स्वप्रभावसदृशीम् वितेनतुः॥ ११-५३**

tau sametya samaye sthitāvubhau bhūpatī varuṇavāsavopamau |
kanyakātanayakautukakriyām svaprabhāvasadr̥śīm vitenatuḥ || 11-53

11-53. The two great kings (i.e. Janak and Dashrath), who resembled the two great heavenly lords such as Indra (the king of gods and heaven) and Varun (the patron god of water, including the oceans), joined hands to do the rituals and ceremonies needed for the marriage of their daughters and sons respectively in accordance with their royal status, and in a way that was appropriate for their regal grandeur.

Verse no. 54:

पार्थिवीमुदवहद्रघूद्वहो लक्ष्मणस्तदनुजामथोर्मिलाम्।

यौ तयोरवरजौ वरौजसौ तौ कुशध्वजसुते सुमध्यमे॥ ११-५४

pārthivīmudavahadraghūdvhaho lakṣmaṇastadanujāmathamilām |

yau tayoravarajau varaujasau tau kuśadhvasute sumadhyame || 11-54

11-54. Lord Ram, who was the glory of king Raghu's lineage, was married to Sita, and his younger brother Laxman was married to Sita's younger sister named Urmila.

Their two younger brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, were married respectively to Mandavi and Srutkirti who were daughters of Kushdwaj, the younger brother of king Janak.

Verse no. 55:

ते चतुर्थसहितास्त्रयो बभुः सूनवो नववधूपरिग्रहाः।

सामदानविधिभेदनिग्रहाः सिद्धिमन्त इव तस्य भूपतेः॥ ११-५५

te caturthasahitāstrayo babhuḥ sūnavo navavadhūparigrahāḥ |

sāmadānavidhibhedanigrahāḥ siddhimanta iva tasya bhūpateḥ || 11-55

11-55. The four sons of king Dashrath looked glorious with their respective wives by their sides as if the great king had got the reward in the form of success in carrying out all his royal duties and political endeavours by employing the four principles of polity such as Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda¹.

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 84 of Chapter 10 of Raghuvansham where these four principles have been explained. In this referred verse, the four brothers are likened to the four principles of Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda.

Now in the current verse, king Dashrath's happiness is compared to the success one achieves by implementing these four cardinal principles of political science in practical life. If his four sons stood for these four cardinal principles, then with their wives by their sides, it was like these four principles bearing fruits or showing rewards by their successful application.

Every father wishes that his sons get married and his daughters-in-law are good ladies of noble character. There is no better happiness for the father if this wish of his is granted, as was the case with Dashrath.]

Verse no. 56:

ता नराधिपसुता नृपात्मजैः ते च ताभिरगमन्कृतार्थताम्।
सोऽभवद्वरवधूसमागमः प्रत्ययप्रकृतियोगसंनिभः॥ ११-५६

tā narādhipasutā nrpātmajaiḥ te ca tābhiragamankṛtārthatām |
so'bhavadvavaravadhūsamāgamaḥ pratyayaprakṛtiyogasannibhaḥ || 11-56

11-56. The union of the four royal princesses of king Janak's household with the four royal princes of king Dashrath's household made all the four couples exhilarated and fulfilled, as if the word 'marriage' itself had achieved its true meaning with the four bridegrooms and their respective four groom coming together in an unbreakable union. It is like the case of a word having a meaning only when its constituent letters are brought together, because otherwise the individual letters, that together form any given word, do not have any independent meaning of their own.

[Note--Any word acquires a comprehensible or intelligible meaning when its constituent letters are written together, and that also in a sensible order or sequence. The word would be no such thing as a 'word' if these individual letters of the alphabet are not brought together. Further, any random assembly of letters would also not form a sensible word, and we would call such an assembly a 'spelling error' or a senseless jumble of letters.

Likewise, the auspicious word 'marriage' bore fruit when a conjugal union was established between the four princes of king Dashrath and the four princesses of king Janak, and that also in a manner whereby the four grooms and the four brides fitted in well with each other with perfect harmony.]

Verse no. 57:

एवमात्तरतिरात्मसंभवां तान्निवेश्य चतुरोऽपि तत्र सः।
अध्वसु त्रिषु विसृष्टमैथिलः स्वाम् पुरीम् दशरथो न्यवर्तत॥ ११-५७

evamāttaratirātmasambhavāṁ tānniveśya caturo'pi tatra saḥ |
adhvasu triṣu viśṛṣṭamaithilaḥ svām purīm daśaratho nyavartata || 11-57

11-57. King Dashrath derived immense satisfaction by marrying all his four sons with four daughters of king Janak of Mithila at a single venue. After completion of attendant ceremonies and rituals, king Dashrath departed for his capital of Ayodhya with the marriage party.

King Janak accompanied him till a distance covered in three days during which both the royal parties pitched camps for the night. After that, king Dashrath politely requested king Janak to return home, and bid the latter an affectionate and warm good-bye before resuming his journey home to his capital.

Verse no. 58:

तस्य जातु मरुतः प्रतीपगा वर्त्मसु ध्वजतरुप्रमाथिनः।

चिक्लिशुर्भृशतया वरुथिनीम् उत्तटा इव नदीरयाः स्थलीम्॥ ११-५८

tasya jātu marutaḥ pratīpagā vartmasu dhvajatarupramāthinaḥ |
cikliśurbhṛśatayā varūthinīm uttatā iva nadīrayāḥ sthālīm || 11-58

11-58. One day, a strong wind swept in as the army of king Dashrath marched home, and made the royal flags and banners of king Dashrath's army flutter violently atop their shafts just as a strong storm would shake the trees and their leaves violently in a forest, or turbulent currents of a river in spate would overflow its banks and cause havoc in its surrounding areas.

Verse no. 59:

लक्ष्यते स्म तदनन्तरम् रविः बद्धभीमपरिवेषमण्डलः।

वैनतेयशमितस्य भोगिनो भोगवेष्टित इव च्युतो मणिः॥ ११-५९

lakṣyate sma tadanantaram raviḥ baddhabhīmapariveṣamaṇḍalaḥ |
vainateyaśamitasya bhogino bhogaveṣṭita iva cyuto maṇiḥ || 11-59

11-59. Thereafter, a halo surrounded the bright disc of the sun and gave the impression that when Garud (the celestial Eagle) had attacked a giant serpent, the jewel on the hood of this serpent got dislodged, but the serpent, even though wounded, coiled its body around its fallen jewel to protect it.

[Note--Here in this analogy, the sun is compared to the illuminated jewel on the hood of the serpent, and the halo around it to the coiled body of the serpent. In mythology and folklore, it is believed that there is a class of serpents who carry an illuminated gem on their hoods. This gem glows in the dark of the night, showing the serpent light as it seeks its prey. This type of snake is called the Indian Cobra (naja naja), and the gem on its hood is called the 'Naga Mani'. It is actually an effervescent secretion with fluorescent qualities that effuses from the snake's body and collects in a transparent sac on its hood.

From a modern viewpoint, when the storm arose, a huge cloud of dust was kicked up which dulled the clarity of the blue sky and blurred the sun. When viewed from the ground it looked as if a halo or a ring has formed around the disc of the sun. The brightness of the sun too faded due to the dust, just like the case of the jewel on the serpent's hood becoming dirty and losing its brightness when it falls on the ground after Garud attacks the serpent.]

Verse no. 60:

श्येनपक्षपरिधूसरालकाः सांध्यमेघरुधिरार्द्रवाससः।

अङ्गना इव रजस्वला दिशो नो बभूवुरवलोकनक्षमाः॥ ११-६०

śyenapakṣaparidhūsarālakāḥ sām̐dhyamegharudhirārdravāsasah |
aṅganā iva rajasvalā diśo no babhūvuravalokanakṣamāḥ || 11-60

11-60. The evening looked hideous and foreboding with its four directions appearing dull and grey as if a large bird-of-prey, such as a vulture or an eagle, is arriving, with its wings spread wide to hide the sunlight, to devour its prey, and the ochre colour of the atmosphere (caused by the dust through which the light of the setting sun was viewed) resembled the blood-soaked clothes of a menstruating woman whose sight is a taboo and not worth seeing.

{The whole atmosphere presented a ominous look as if some grave event was about to happen. Obviously, king Dashrath became alarmed as it was a bad omen, especially when he was returning home with a marriage party of his sons and their wives.}

Verse no. 61:

भास्करश्च दिशमध्युवास याम् ताम् श्रिताः प्रतिभयम् ववासिरे।
क्षत्रशोणितपितृक्रियोचितम् चोदयन्त्य इव भार्गवम् शिवाः॥ ११-६१

bhāskaraśca diśamadyuvāsa yām tām śritāḥ pratibhayam vavāsire |
kṣatraśoṇitapitr̥kriyocitam codayantya iva bhārgavam śivāḥ || 11-61

11-61. In the direction where the sun was present during the evening prior to sunset (i.e. in the western horizon), female jackals were crying terribly with a blood-curdling howl as if women of the Kshatriya race were calling out Parashuram who was accustomed to kill male Kshatriyas and offer their blood to his father as oblation.

[Note--Sage Parashuram was an inveterate hater of the warrior Kshatriya class. The howling of jackals is a very bad omen, especially in the evening and night as it portends danger and death.

Parashuram is also known as 'Ram with a battle-axe'. The legendary story associated with him is very interesting, and it is as follows:

He is regarded as the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdaagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Shursena, also known as 'Sahastraarjun' because he had a thousand arms. He was the son of Kaartavirya-Arjuna. The story in brief is as follows:—

There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as 'Sahastraarjun' or 'Arjun with a thousand hands'. Once he approached the Ocean and

asked who was stronger than him. The Ocean told him that sage Jamdagni's son Parashuram was a fit match for him and would welcome him in battle. Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. {This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat's Aashwamedhik Parva.}

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriyas to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

A slight variation of this story appears in Mahabharat, Vanparva. According to this version, when the thousand-armed king known as 'Sahastraarjun' had taken away Jamdagni's all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu, Parashuram rushed to cut all the arms of Sahastraarjun as punishment. Sahastraarjun's kith and kin came back to the hermitage of Jamdagni when Parashuram was not there, and took revenge by killing the sage. Parashuram's mother grieved and wailed. When Parashuram came back and discovered what had happened, he promised his mother that he would take revenge, and vowed to kill all the Kshatriya kings on the surface of the earth to avenge Sahastraarjun's killing of his father. So in this way he had also fulfilled the wishes of his mother.

This fact that Parashuram had avenged his father's death by killing the Kshatriya kings because one of the members of this race, king Sahastraarjun, had killed his father sage Jamdagni, is lauded by Lord Ram in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 76, verse no. 2.

In *Mahabharat*, Shantiparva, Canto 49, verse nos. 45-47 it is mentioned that it was Sahastraarjun's son who had stolen the Kamdhenu cow, and not Sahastraarjun himself.

It ought to be noted that 'Sahastraarjun' is also known as 'Sahastrabaahu' because he had a thousand arms.

Now, after unnecessarily killing so many innocent Kshatriya kings, who had committed no offence, just to avenge his father's death at the hands of Sahastraarjun, sage

Parashuram was severely criticized by the community of Brahmins, which made the sage contrite and full of guilt. So, with a somber and disgusted mood, he went to the forest to do penance. At that time, sage Vishwamitra's grandson named Paraivasu came to him and teased him, saying, 'A fire sacrifice was done recently in which so many countless Kshatriya kings had come. But you did not kill any of them, thereby disobeying the promise you had made to your mother and have also violated your own vows. This is a sin in itself.' Peeved and instigated, Parashuram rose immediately and went berserk, killing and hacking all the kings and their kith and kin at random. Their pregnant wives somehow escaped by hiding here and there. After this, Parashuram performed a Horse Sacrifice known as the 'Ashwamedh Yajna', and gave the entire land (earth) that he had snatched from the kings to sage Kashyap as donation or gift during this sacrifice.

Sage Kashyap was wise, and he was worried that if some way out is not found then one day Parashuram will create such a situation by repeatedly killing kings that there would be no one to take care of the creatures who inhabit the planet, because the main function of the Kshatriya kings was to look after the welfare of the subjects of their kingdoms and protect the earth from marauding savages.

So Kashyap told Parashuram, 'Now that you have given me this earth as a gift, it belongs to me, and henceforth you have no right to kill any of its inhabitants (including of course the kings). You go to the shore of the southern ocean and do Tapa there.' After this, Parashuram lived on the shore of the southern ocean during the day, and left the earth during the night.

This version of the story is clearly mentioned in *Valmiki Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 25-26, and Canto 76, verse nos. 13-14.

While normally the killing of the Kshatriya kings repeatedly by sage Parashuram seems to be a taint on his saintly and hermit-like life and upbringing, there is a profound philosophy behind it. Now let us examine it.

As time passed, by and by, the Kshatriya class had become very haughty and arrogant because all physical powers and military strength were vested in it. The king's treasury was supposed to be a common pool where the society could keep its wealth that it generates by toil, and the king was merely its custodian. But as time passed, the kings began to treat this treasury as their personal property, and while they rolled in luxury the peasant class, the working class that toiled day in and day out to generate this wealth hadn't a square meal to eat in their empty tummies and a roof to cover them against the vagaries of cruel Nature. Though the powers and wealth of the Kshatriya class were meant for the welfare of the society as a whole, more often than not these elements went to the head of kings, making them arrogant, haughty, exploitative and insensitive towards others.

We read about an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of sage Parashuram who had eliminated the Kshatriya race several times over by killing them and handing over the earth to the Brahmins. The elimination of such wild kings belonging to the Kshatriya Varna who had deviated from their duties and moral responsibilities that were ordained by ancient sages and seers became obligatory for the Supreme Lord of the world as the Lord was the Father of all, and he could not bear with one of his off-springs making others suffer because of his own pervert behaviour and selfishness. Hence, the Lord assumed the form of sage Parashuram to teach a lesson to such wicked kings who had fallen from their paths.

Killing such Kshatriya kings and restoring the earth to Brahmins should be viewed in this context; it has a great symbolic meaning. Whenever evil tendencies and negativity rises in this world, be it in the guise of demons or kings, the Lord comes down to set the house in order. This is the reason why sage Parashuram is regarded as one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world.

The logical spin-off of this is that Lord Ram and sage Parashuram are both the same Lord in different roles. What Lord Ram did for the welfare of sages and the humble creatures of the world by killing their tormentor demons led by Ravana of Lanka, sage Parashuram did the same thing by killing arrogant and wicked Kshatriya kings and handing over the world to pious and holy men known as Brahmins.

The fact that sage Parashuram had repeatedly killed the Kshatriya kings and handed the earth over to Brahmins is mentioned in Tulsidas' epic story of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 272

The *Shiva-Puran* has narrated the story of sage Parashuram as follows—

There was a king named Gadhi. His daughter was name Satyavati. Satyavati was married to the sage Richika. Richika arranged for a spectacular sacrifice. Some rice pudding was obtained from the yajna and Richika gave it to his wife Satyavati.

He said, 'Split this rice pudding into two halves. Eat half yourself and give the remaining half to your mother. Here, let me divide it. This is your half and that is your mother's. We are Brahmins. So we will have a son who will display the traits of a Brahmin. Your father is a Kshatriya, and your mother will have a son who will behave like a Kshatriya.'

Saying this, Richika went off to meditate in the forest. But mother and daughter managed to mix up their halves. In the course of his meditations, Richika realized that Satyavati was going to give birth to a Brahmin son who would display Kshatriya traits.

Through his powers, he managed to postpone this birth by a generation. So Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni. It was Jamadagni's son Parashuram who exhibited all the Kshatriya like characteristics.

Gadhi's son was Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra was born a Kshatriya. But because of the mixing up of the rice pudding, Vishvamitra turned out to be Brahmin-like.

There was a king of the Haihaya dynasty named Arjun. He had a thousand arms. He had also obtained the boon that flaming fire itself would be perpetually present on the tip of his arrow. Whenever he shot an arrow, the fire from the tip of the arrow burnt up the target. In this fashion, Arjuna used to burn up villages, cities and forests. He once burnt up the hermitages of sages. And one of the sages cursed Arjun that he would be killed by Parashuram.

Parashurama learnt the art of fighting from Shiva himself. While Parashuram was away learning how to fight, Arjuna arrived in Jamadagni's hermitage. Jamadagni had a wonderful cow (dhenu), known as a kamadhenu because it produced whatever objects one asked (Kama) from it. Using this Kamadhenu, Jamadagni treated Arjun and his entrie retinue to a royal feast.

Arjun asked Jamadangi to give him this cow, but the sage refused. Arjun then asked his soldiers to forcibly take away the cow. But just as this was going on, Parashuram arrived. He killed Arjun, slicing off Arjun's thousand arms in the process.

Having disposed of Arjun, Parashuram went off to meditate and pay another visit to Shiva.

Taking advantage of Parashuram's absence, Arjun's sons invaded Jamadagni's hermitage. They killed Jamadagni. When Parashurama returned, he exacted vengeance for this evil deed. He killed Arjuna's sons. Since Arjuna and his sons happened to be Kshatriyas, Parashuram also killed all the Kshatriyas in the world. He did this not once, but twenty-one times over. Why twenty-one times? The reason was that there were twenty-one weapon-marks on the dead Jamadagni's body.

But killing was a crime and Parashuram had committed a sin. As penance, Parashuram donated cows and performed a lot of Tapa. He also arranged an Ashvamedha Yagya, the great horse-sacrifice. All this did not prove to be atonement enough. To complete the penance, Parashuram sought the advice of the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa told him to perform the donation that is known as Tulaa-Purush. A Tula (or 'Tulaa-danda') is a pair of scales; the person (Purush) who is performing the donation is placed on one side of the weighing scale. On the other side are placed objects like honey, clarified butter, molasses, clothing and gold. The weight of the objects being donated has to be equal to the weight of the person performing the donation. This is known as 'Tulaa-purush'. Parashuram performed Tulaa-purusha and was freed from his sin.

In Tulsidas' epic "Ram Charit Manas", Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268, sage Parashuram is called "Bhrigu-pati Kamal Patangaa", which literally means 'the lord in the family of sage Bhrigu (Bhrigu-pati), one who was like the sun (Patangaa) with respect to this family representing a lotus (Kamal)'. The metaphor of 'the sun and the lotus flower' is used to mean that Parashuram gave great fame and glory to this family of great sages who felt happy that he was a member of their race just like the lotus flower that feels so happy when the sun rises in the sky that it opens its petals to indicate its joy at the sight of the sun.]

Verse no. 62:

तत्प्रतीपपवनादिवैकृतम् प्रेक्ष्य शान्तिमधिकृत्य कृत्यविद्।

अन्वयुङ्क्त गुरुमीश्वरः क्षितेः स्वन्तमित्यलघयत्स तद्व्यथाम्॥ ११-६२

tatpratīpapavanādivaikṛtam prekṣya śāntimadhikṛtya kṛtyavid |

anvayunkta gurumīśvaraḥ kṣiteḥ svantamityalaghayatsa tadvyathām || 11-62

11-62. Upon observing ill-omens such as a violent storm, red sky, howling of jackals etc, king Dashrath was very alarmed. Confused, he did not know what to make of these signs and how to overcome any unfavourable situation that may arise as a consequence. So he consulted his royal priest, sage Vashistha. The wise sage who could see the future, however, assured the king that he need not worry, saying that after some initial problems, all will end well. Sage Vashistha's assurance alleviated king Dashrath's worries to a great extent as he had great faith in the sage from experience.

[Note--King Dashrath had a long experience with sage Vashistha which had taught him that the sage's advise had never been wrong. Hence, when the sage advised the king to remain calm as no harm would come due these bad signs, the latter felt relieved.]

Verse no. 63:

तेजसः सपदि राशिरुत्थितः प्रादुरास किल वाहिनीमुखे।

यः प्रमृज्य नयनानि सैनिकैः लक्षणीयपुरुषाकृतिश्चिरात्॥ ११-६३

tejasaḥ sapadi rāśirutthitaḥ prādurāsa kila vāhinīmukhe |
yaḥ pramṛjya nayanāni sainikaiḥ lakṣaṇīyapuruṣākṛtiścīrāt || 11-63

11-63. All of a sudden, there appeared before the army a figure so dazzlingly bright that it blinded the soldiers. They rubbed their eyes and blinked to clear their vision. After their eyes became accustomed to the surroundings, they saw a male figure resembling a great sage.

Verse no. 64:

पित्र्यमंशमुपवीतलक्षणम् मातृकम् च धनुरुर्जितम् दधत्।

यः ससोम इव घर्मदीधितिः सदिजिह्व इव चन्दनद्रुमः॥ ११-६४

pitryamaṁśamupavītalakṣaṇam mātṛkam ca dhanurūrjitam dadhat |
yaḥ sasoma iva gharmaḍīdhitiḥ sadvijihva iva candanadrumaḥ || 11-64

11-64. That radiant figure of a sage wore a sacred thread slung across one of his shoulders, implying he was a Brahmin, because his father was also a Brahmin. A strong bow hung from his other shoulder, implying that he had the blood of the warrior class, i.e. the Kshatriya race, in him too, because his mother was a Kshatriya.

In this state, the figure of the sage appeared to present a contrasting sight: it was as if the blazing sun and the calm moon coexisted in him, or as a venom-spitting serpent was coiled around the cool stem of the sandalwood tree.

[Note--The figure of the sage was as radiant as the sun, and his angry countenance resembled the fire radiating out of the sun, and the bow represented the strength and power that he possessed, indicating that he does not tolerate any opposition.

On the other hand, the sacred thread that he wore represented the calmness and peace that Brahmins usually have, qualities associated with the moon.

In a similar way, the serpent is vicious and its venom is fiery, while the sandalwood is regarded as cool and soothing, which is why its paste is applied to cool and calm the body.

These two opposite and contrasting examples show how Kalidas expertly employed the figure of speech called 'oxymoron' to drive home a point. Here it is meant to emphasise that when Parashuram became annoyed, his anger and wrath had the ability to scorch and destroy anything like the heat of the sun and the venom of a serpent. But when his initial burst of anger subsided, then his true nature as a forgiving sage and a peaceful Brahmin came to the fore, for he became calm and soothing like the moon and the sandalwood tree.]

Verse no. 65:

येन रोषपरुषात्मनः पितुः शासने स्थितिभिदोऽपि तस्थुषा।
वेपमानजननीशिरश्छिदा प्रागजीयत घृणा ततो मही॥ ११-६५

yena roṣaparuṣātmanah pituḥ śāsane sthitibhido'pi tasthuṣā |
vepamānajananiśiraśchidā prāgajīyata ghrṇā tato mahī || 11-65

11-65. To obey his intemperate father (Jamdagni)--who had become mad with anger and so enraged that he had become blind to the probity and propriety of his irrational actions and the consequences of the orders he was about to give his son (Parashuram)--he (i.e. Parashuram) had no compunctions or second thoughts in cutting-off the head of his mother Renuka who was trembling with fear and pleading for mercy. One can well imagine the stone-like sternness and the stubbornness of such a person's heart.

At the time when he (Parashuram) had decapitated his mother, he had first overcome the natural resistance that a person's conscience offers in trying to stop him when he is about to commit such a heinous crime, and then the sense of guilt of actually having done it. After this event, he had become so furious that he unilaterally conquered the earth by slaying all the members of his mother's race, i.e. the Kshatriyas.

[Note--When Parashuram had gone on the offensive against the Kshatriya race, he had forgotten that he was supposed to be 'Brahmin sage', who is deemed to be calm, polite, peace-loving, humble, righteous, and careful with his deeds and actions to ensure they are not cruel and do not violate Dharma. Killing one's mother is never something to boast about. Obedience to one's father does not give one the licence to become reckless. But except this wrong-doing on his part of killing his own mother, which may have made him lose the balance of his mind and become blood-thirsty, there is some justification in why Parashuram went on the rampage against the entire Kshatriya race.

This warrior race had gone out of hands; they had become arrogant, haughty, cruel and reckless. Since Brahmins had no means to counter the Kshatriyas as they did not want to pick up arms as it would be against their principles to abhor violence, and the other two races, i.e. the trading class known as the Vaishyas, and the service class known as the Sudras, did not have the courage and the wherewithal to counter the ruthlessness of the Kshatriyas, the natural law of justice as envisioned by the Creator came into play to restore the balance--i.e. to save the innocent and punish the guilty. Since the Brahmins were supposed to be the guardians of this law of natural justice as established by the Creator, they had the moral duty to enforce it. And since the Kshatriyas had gone out of their control, so it had become necessary that someone who was sage with the qualities of a warrior would pick up the cudgel to finish the task. And this onus fell on the shoulders of Parashuram.

So therefore, from a broader perspective viewed against the backdrop of the conditions prevalent during those times, sage Parashuram was merely carrying out his mandate of reining in the reckless Kshatriyas when he decided to trounce their pride of invincibility by defeating and eliminating them from earth.

But then again, complete annihilation of the Kshatriyas from earth for all times to come would have disrupted the structure of the society in the long run, so it became necessary to restore them, but in a more restrained form. This explains why many great kings who were well-behaved and righteous thrived even in the presence of Parashuram. We have examples of kings Dashrath and Janak.

Further, by this time, Parashuram had exhausted the stupendous powers he had accumulated by the virtue of his penances and austerities, as by his relentless campaign of slaying Kshatriyas he had committed grave sins which burnt all his spiritual merits, making him like a dumb cannon ball. This will soon become evident when all his fretting and fuming angrily cut no ice and had no effect on Lord Ram, and in the end the sage appeared crestfallen and harmless like a defused bomb that had been rendered harmless.]

Verse no. 66:

अक्षबीजवलयेन निर्बभौ दक्षिणश्रवणसंस्थितेन यः।

क्षत्रियान्तकरणैकविंशतेः व्याजपूर्वगणनामिवोद्वहन्॥ ११-६६

akṣabījavalayena nirbabhau dakṣiṇaśravaṇasaṁsthitena yaḥ |
kṣatriyāntakaraṇaikaviṁśateḥ vyājapūrvagaṇanāmivodvahan || 11-66

11-66. The figure of the sage that appeared before the army of king Dashrath had an earring consisting of twenty-one beads of Rudraksha seeds dangling from his ear as if he had kept count of the number of times he had eliminated the Kshatriyas by the number of beads in his earring.

[Note--Rudraksha is an auspicious tree associated with Lord Shiva. Its botanical name is Elaeocarpus ganitrus. The word 'Rudraksha' has two parts--viz. 'Rudra' which refers to Lord Shiva, and 'Aksha' meaning eye. Therefore, these beads represent tears from Lord Shiva's eyes--this is mentioned in Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 7, verse no. 8. It is said to enhance positive energy, ward off evil, help in spiritual growth, and promote good luck, health and prosperity. Rudraksha beads are used in prayer rosaries.]

Verse no. 67:

तम् पितुर्वधभवेन मन्युना राजवंशनिधनाय दीक्षितम्।

बालसूनुरवलोक्य भार्गवम् स्वाम् दशाम् च विषसाद पार्थिवः॥ ११-६७

tam piturvadhabhavana manyunā rājavamśanidhanāya dīkṣitam |
bālasūnuravalokya bhārgavam svām daśām ca viṣasāda pārthivah || 11-67

11-67. When king Dashrath saw that the furious figure standing before him was that of sage Parashuram, he was mighty frightened as the sage was reputed to have become so angry at the killing of his father Jamdagni that he had taken a vow of eliminating all the kingly class representing the Kshatriya race from the surface of the earth, because king

Dashrath too belonged to this race. Further, his four sons were too young at present to defend themselves against the wrath of this mighty warrior-sage. This situation caused immense worry and perplexity in the mind of king Dashrath as he did not know what would happen next.

Verse no. 68:

नाम राम इति तुल्यमात्मजे वर्तमानमहिते च दारुणे।

हृद्यमस्य भयदायि चाभवद् रत्नजातमिव हारसर्पयोः॥ ११-६८

nāma rāma iti tulyamātmaje vartamānamahite ca dāruṇe |
hr̥dyamasya bhayadāyi cābhavad ratnajātamiva hārasarpayoḥ || 11-68

11-68. The word 'Ram' was the name of his eldest son as well as was an integral part of the sage's name Parashuram (Parashu + Ram = Parashu-ram). This was a fascinating coincidence, and the fact that the word 'Ram' stood for divinity, calmness, joy and spiritual peace, it gave some solace to the king because the sage would find an image of himself being reflected in his son Ram, and this would act as a deterrent for the sage and prevent him from taking any rash action¹.

The same word 'Ram' being the name of his son as well as being an integral part of the sage's name Parashuram presented a contrasting picture of fearlessness and joy represented by Lord Ram, king Dashrath's son, and of fear and terror as represented by sage Parashuram just like the case of a 'Mani' (gem) being a welcome source of joy and prosperity when it is present in a garland worn by someone around his neck, or is a source of fear when it is seen on the hood of a venomous snake².

[Note--¹The word 'Ram' symbolised peace and joy as it was the name of the personified form of the Supreme Being. But the same word causes fear when it is included as a part of another name with a prefix of an 'axe' as was the case with the sage's name, which was Parashu (axe)-Ram. So therefore, when the sage faces Lord Ram, he would see his 'own image' in the Lord by the virtue of the word 'Ram' and feel ashamed that inspite of having such a holy word in his name, he has brought condemnation and sinfulness upon himself because of the prefix 'Parash' meaning an axe that only kills instead of giving peace and happiness. By introspection, the sage would perhaps regret his past deeds and feel ashamed of himself. This means he would abandon his aggressiveness and become placid.

The fact that sage Parashuram could see his own image in Lord Ram is a matter of fact which would be evident when we read verse nos. 77-80 and the note appended to verse no. 80. This is because sage Parashuram and Lord Ram were both incarnations of Lord Vishnu, which proves that the sage saw his own image being reflected in Lord Ram.

As we proceed with our reading, we would also see that when sage Parashuram actually came face-to-face with Lord Ram, then instead of dashing angrily at the Lord with his battle-axe drawn, he would stall mid-step and only spoke angrily with Lord Ram. Why so? What prevented him from lunging at the Lord whom he saw as his adversary

and someone to be punished, especially when the adversary was a prince of the Kshatriya race with which the sage had an inveterate hatred?

The answer is apparent when we analyse the situation: When the sage saw Lord Ram, he observed that the latter was unruffled, calm, smiling and polite, which was quite contrary to the natural character and inborn instinct of a warrior, especially with one who has young blood running through his veins, for a true blue-blooded warrior of the Kshatriya race would never tolerate someone threatening him for no fault of his, as Parashuram was doing presently. Lord Ram was neither angry nor agitated at the impertinent and rude behaviour of the sage.

In contrast, the sage, who was a Brahmin, was fretting and fuming angrily, pouring venom with his angry words and aggressive postures, something contrary to a Brahmin's nature and character, for a Brahmin is expected to be calm, polite, forgiving and peaceful. This acted as a break for sage Parashuram as he quietly pondered over this sharp contrast and silently felt ashamed of himself.

Further, both Lord Ram and sage Parashuram had the word 'Ram' representing their identity, with the sage's name having an added prefix 'Parashu' meaning an axe. When the sage saw Lord Ram standing before him, he was virtually seeing his own image in his adversary, but one that was scarred with ignominy as symbolised by the word 'Parashu', meaning an axe, in his own name, a word that stood for cruelty and terror, something a Brahmin should abhor.

In verse no. 73 herein below, the sage says that Lord Ram was trying to usurp his fame and glory, because the world would henceforth identify the Lord with the word 'Ram', and would forget the sage who also had this word as part of his name. Lord Ram would gradually be recognised for the virtues of valour, courage and strength, while the sage would begin to fade in oblivion and become de-recognised over time. So therefore, thought the sage, it was a worrying situation. If he willingly uses his axe to cut-off Lord Ram's head, he would symbolically cut-off the prefix of his own name with its other half--i.e. he would voluntarily cut-off the word 'Ram' from its prefix 'Parashu'. It would then completely obliterate him--because with the word 'Ram' out of the way, only the word Parashu would be left, and surely the name 'axe' is not something the sage would be proud of having!

²As for the example of the 'mani', the gem, cited in this verse, when it is worn as a jewel in a garland or necklace, it gives happiness and joy, but when it is present on the hood of a poisonous serpent it causes fear. No one would venture to examine and appreciate a serpent's mani, but all would like to do it with a mani studded in a necklace or a garland.]

Verse no. 69:

**अर्घ्यमर्घ्यमिति वादिनम् नृपम् सोऽनवेक्ष्य भरताग्रजो यतः।
क्षत्रकोपदहनार्चिषम् ततः संदधे दृशमुदग्रतारकाम्॥ ११-६९**

arghyamarghyamiti vādinam nr̥pam so'navekṣya bharatāgrajo yataḥ |
kṣātrakopadahanārciṣam tataḥ saṁdadhe dṛśamudagrātārakām || 11-69

11-69. Parashuram paid no heed to king Dashrath who was eagerly trying to placate the angry sage by repeatedly making him offerings befitting his stature to worship him, and instead turned his fiery eyes, from which flame-like angry gaze emanated, to stare wrathfully at Lord Ram.

Verse no. 70:

तेन कार्मुकनिषक्तमुष्टिना राघवो विगतभीः पुरोगतः।
अङ्गुलीविवरचारिणम् शरम् कुर्वता निजगदे युयुत्सुना॥ ११-७०

tena karmukaniṣaktamuṣṭinā rāghavo vigatabhīḥ purogataḥ |
aṅgulīvivaracāriṇam śaram kurvatā nijagade yuyutsunā || 11-70

11-70. Sage Parashuram gripped his bow in one hand and the arrow in the other hand as he readied himself for combat when he came face-to-face with Lord Ram, who stood before him fearlessly.

Verse no. 71:

क्षत्रजातमपकारवैरि मे तन्निहत्य बहुशः शमम् गतः।
सुप्तसर्प इव दण्डघट्टनात् रोषितोऽस्मि तव विक्रमश्रवात्॥ ११-७१

kṣatrajātamapakāravairi me tannihatya bahuśaḥ śamam gataḥ |
suptasarpa iva daṇḍaghaṭṭanāt roṣito'smi tava vikramaśravāt || 11-71

11-71. Parashuram burst out angrily: "The entire Kshatriya race is my enemy as they had been instrumental in my father's death. That is why I had eliminated them twenty-one times. But just as a serpent sleeping calmly is aroused and begins to hiss violently if it is stoked with a stick, in the like manner I have been aroused when I heard of your valour that you exhibited in Janakpur by breaking Shiva's bow.

{I had thought that all the Kshatriyas have been conquered by me, and none had the ardour, strength or courage to do some dare-devil deed like breaking a mighty bow. So when you broke the bow, it produced such a huge twang that it disturbed my meditation and disrupted my composure. I have come to judge you and bring you to book, and to tell you to mind yourself.}

Verse no. 72:

मैथिलस्य धनुरन्यपार्थिवैः त्वम् किलानमितपूर्वमक्षणोः।
तन्निशम्य भवता समर्थये वीर्यशृङ्गमिव भग्नमात्मनः॥ ११-७२

maithilasya dhanuranyapārthivaiḥ tvam kilānamitapūrvamakṣaṇoḥ |
tanniśamya bhavatā samarthaye vīryaśṛṅgamiva bhagnamātmanah || 11-72

11-72. The bow of king Janak could not be lifted and bent by any warrior. You have broken it. I have taken this act of yours as a personal affront because it looks to me as if you have caught me by my horn and challenged my fame as being the mightiest warrior, and have thereby tried to undermine my glory, strength and valour.

Verse no. 73:

**अन्यदा जगति राम इत्ययम् शब्द उच्चरित एव मामगात्।
व्रीडमावहति मे स संप्रति व्यस्तवृत्तिरुदयोन्मुखे त्वयि॥ ११-७३**

anyadā jagati rāma ityayam śabda uccarita eva māmagāt |
vṛīḍamāvahati me sa saṁprati vyastavṛttirudayonmukhe tvayi || 11-73

11-73. Till now, the world associated the honourable word 'Ram' with me as it is part of my name. But now it appears that you wish to reverse it and usurp this privilege from me, because gradually the world would begin to associate this honourable word with you as you rise to prominence, with your fame and glory on the ascendance, and I would be sidelined. It would cause shame to me, and this situation is unacceptable for me.

Verse no. 74:

**बिभ्रतोऽस्त्रमचलेऽप्यकुण्ठितम् द्वौ रूपं मम मतौ समागसौ।
धेनुवत्सहरणाच्च हैहयस्त्वम् च कीर्तिमपहर्तुमुद्यतः॥ ११-७४**

bibhrato'stramacale'pyakunṭhitam dvau rūpū mama matau samāgasau |
dhenuvatsaharaṇācca haihaya stvam ca kīrtimapahartumudyataḥ || 11-74

11-74. My axe was not effected (scratched or blunted) when it hit mount Kronch¹. There have been no one yet who could muster the courage to confront me, except Sahatrarjun who had the temerity to snatch the Kamdhenu cow with its calf from my father Jamdagni². And you seem to be the second one who is determined to snatch my fame and undermine my glory as the mightiest warrior who has no match in this world, one whose feats cannot be replicated by any other warrior. You want to deprive me of my fame.

[Note--¹The story goes that when sage Parashuram was reclaiming land from the sea, an undersea hill called Kronch obstructed his path. It was then that he hit it with his axe to clear the path.

²This story has already been narrated as a note to verse no. 61 herein above.]

Verse no. 75:

क्षत्रियान्तकरणोऽपि विक्रमः तेन मामवति नाजिते त्वयि।

पावकस्य महिमा स गण्यते कक्षवज्जलति सागरेऽपि यः॥ ११-७५

kṣatriyāntakaraṇo'pi vikramaḥ tena māmavati nājite tvayi |
pāvakasya mahimā sa gaṇyate kakṣavajjalati sāgare'pi yaḥ || 11-75

11-75. This is why I will not be satisfied until I subdue you inspite of having vanquished the Kshatriyas twenty-one times. The glory and powers of the energy inherently present in the fire is praised only when it is capable of leaping up and heating the water of the ocean with as much ease as it does on a dry patch of grassland¹.

[Note--¹This is evident when we the undersea volcanoes erupt with such violence that they send plumes of hot water and gas rising up to the surface of the ocean. The power of the fire present in the bowls of the earth is also evident by the fact that the water of the ocean is warm enough to sustain a healthy marine life consisting of both flora and fauna. Although water by itself can extinguish the fire, but it fails to suppress the fire of the ocean bed. Then there are hot-water springs where the water literally boils. It is another evidence of the power of the fire to remain alive and active even when surrounded by its arch enemy, the water.]

Verse no. 76:

विद्धि चात्तबलमोजसा हरेः ऐश्वरम् धनुरभाजि यत्त्वया।

खातमूलमनिलो नदीरयैः पातयत्यपि मृदुस्तटद्रुमम्॥ ११-७६

viddhi cāttabalamojasā hareḥ aiśvaram dhanurabhāji yattvayā |
khātamūlamanilo nadīrayaiḥ pātayatyapi mṛdustaṭadrumam || 11-76

11-76. Admonishing Lord Ram, the enraged sage further said: "The bow of Lord Shiva that you had broken, an act of which you are so proud of, was nevertheless useless and devoid of any strength as Lord Vishnu had already deprived it of its original strength and glory. So therefore, what great feat have you achieved by breaking a thing that is already hollow and weakened from its core, just like the case of tree on the bank of a river whose roots have been made bare by erosion due to the water of the river that constantly cuts through the earth around the tree, leading the tree to topple over even with a low intensity breeze. Say, what great glory would the wind get by toppling over such a weakened tree which has lost its foothold on the ground? Say, what great achievement you claim for yourself by breaking an old and creaking bow?

{Likewise, what are you boasting about regarding breaking of a bow that has already lost its strength, density and resilience, that has already been weakened and rendered nothing but a hollow piece of wood from which its pith has been eroded. It is no more than a worthless reed that any child can easily lift and break.}

Verse no. 77:

तन्मदीयमिदमायुधम् ज्यया संगमय्य सशरम् विकृष्यताम्।
तिष्ठतु प्रधानमेवमप्यहम् तुल्यबाहुतरसा जितस्त्वया॥ ११-७७

tanmadiyamidamāyudham jyayā saṅgamayya saśaram vikṛṣyatām |
tiṣṭhatu pradhanamevamapyaham tulyabāhutarasā jitastvayā || 11-77

11-77. Listen Ram! Before we enter into a combat, let me give you an option. Here is my own bow. If you can hold it, string it, and pull its string, then I would be convinced that you indeed have the same power and strength as I possess, and then I would let you off. I would deem myself as being vanquished by you, and then I would have no need to engage you in a actual combat. Otherwise, your fate is sealed.

[Note--This verse clearly indicates that when sage Parashuram met Lord Ram, his confidence was shaken. He doubted if he could subdue the Lord. So, to escape open humiliation in front of so many people, the sage thought of a wise escape route--viz. let Lord Ram hold and string the sage's bow and pull its string tight. If the Lord actually succeeds in it, then it would be better for the sage to avoid confronting him. This implies that earlier Parashuram had used threats and misused his position as a 'sage' and a 'Brahmin' to subdue kings and princes who would usually surrender to him in deference to his exalted stature of being a Brahmin and a sage. And then the sage would axe them. This situation had made Parashuram a false warrior and a pretender of invincibility who had claimed that he had vanquished all the kings of this world multiple times by the use of the strength of his mighty arms, for the fact was that they had surrendered willingly before him with the least opposition, and Parashuram had then killed them without compunction. Surely this was not something to boast of, and in his madness, the haughty sage had forgotten the underlying ridicule and scorn he was inviting for himself in the eyes of those who saw things critically and analytically. Further, it was a horrendous sin to kill innocent people just because they belonged to a particular race, specially those who had surrendered before him in deference to his stature of being a sage and a Brahmin. This is why he had been continuously doing penances to neutralise his sins, and was not over it yet.

The primary objective of Lord Vishnu's incarnation as sage Parashuram was to punish arrogant and haughty kings who had misused their position in the society to become reckless and torment other sections. But not everyone was evil and unrighteous, and after his initial rampage against the earlier generation of such rulers, the sage had indeed calmed down and hadn't disturbed those kings who were followers of Dharma. Instances are that of king Dashrath, the father of Lord Ram, and king Janak, the father of Sita. Sage Parashuram had not troubled them. But a person's history sticks to him, and it is usually very difficult to erase one's reputation that is often based on one's past deeds.

This is why, as we shall read in the next verse no. 78, the sage relented from repeating his sins again by killing another young prince who has married only recently, and had not committed such a grave sin as to invite the punishment of death. Therefore, the sage asked Lord Ram to surrender before him politely with folded hands, ask for forgiveness and seek immunity from punishment for the little mischief of breaking Lord Shiva's bow.

However, in Lord Ram, the arrogant and haughty sage finally found his nemesis. He had a hunch about it, and that is why he tried to find a way out of the logjam and avoid a confrontation with Lord Ram that would finally expose his hollow claims of invincibility, strength and power.

The story of sage Parashuram subduing innocent kings and princes is a lesson that if one bows to a bully or makes a compromise, the bully would go on bullying him further. But if a person stands straight to call a bully for what he is, then the bully would withdraw.]

Verse no. 78:

कातरोऽसि यदि वोद्गतार्चिषा तर्जितः परशुधारया मम।
ज्यानिघातकठिनाङ्गुलिर्वृथा बध्यतामभययाचनाञ्जलिः॥ ११-७८

kātaro'si yadi vodgatārciṣā tarjitaḥ paraśudhārayā mama |
jyānighātakathināṅgulirvṛthā badhyatāmabhayayācanāñjaliḥ || 11-78

11-78. In case you have become frightened or feel scared of me by seeing the sharp edge of my battle-axe, they it would be better for you that you fold your arms and join the palms of your hands, the fingers of which have developed hardened knots caused by pulling the string of the bow, to ask for forgiveness for your mischief and seek immunity from punishment for breaking the bow (of Lord Shiva). And I shall let you off with a warning."

Verse no. 79:

एवमुक्तवति भीमदर्शने भार्गवे स्मितविकम्पिताधरः।
तद्धनुर्ग्रहणमेव राघवः प्रत्यपद्यत समर्थमुत्तरम्॥ ११-७९

evamuktavati bhīmadarśane bhārgave smitavikampitādharaḥ |
taddhanurgrahaṇameva rāghavaḥ pratyapadyata samarthamuttaram || 11-79

11-79. No sooner had the fierce sage challenged Lord Ram to take his bow, string and pull it if he could, than the Lord smiled politely and took that bow in his own hands very easily, as if that was the only way to give a befitting reply to the wrathful sage and calm him down. Taking Parashuram's bow swiftly in his own hands, decided Lord Ram, was an answer to the sage's arrogance, and the only means to pull his ego down to ground without uttering a single word.

Verse no. 80:

पूर्वजन्मधनुषा समागतः सोऽतिमात्रलघुदर्शनोऽभवत्।
केवलोऽपि सुभगो नवाम्बुदः किम् पुनस्त्रिदशचापलाञ्छितः॥ ११-८०

pūrvajanmadhanuṣā samāgataḥ so'timātralaghudarśano'bhavat |
kevalo'pi subhago navāmbudaḥ kim punastridaśacāpalāñchitaḥ || 11-80

11-80. As soon as Lord Ram took that bow, which actually belonged to Lord Vishnu, Lord Ram's previous form, before it came in sage Parashuram's possession¹, Lord Ram appeared all the more extraordinary and exceptionally charming, just like the case of a fresh rain bearing cloud looking all the more beautiful when a rain-bow appears on it.

[Note--¹The bow of Lord Vishnu is called 'Sharang Bow'. Since sage Parashuram himself is regarded as the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, this bow came to him in a natural progression. But Lord Ram, who was a personified form of Lord Vishnu himself, needed it himself to carry out the mandate of eliminating the demons. So every thing that unfolded was part of a larger scheme of things so that the bow of Lord Vishnu that was hitherto in the safe custody of sage Parashuram can finally come in the hands of Lord Ram. And once the bow went to its rightful owner, i.e. Lord Ram, sage Parashuram immediately realised who the Lord actually was--an image of himself, as both sage Parashuram and Lord Ram were Lord Vishnu in different roles.

In Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284 we read that when sage Parashuram gave the bow to Lord Ram, it swiftly left the sage's hand and went to Lord Ram's hand, implying that the bow felt very glad to return to its rightful owner.

Verse no. 81:

तेन भूमिनिहितैककोटि तत्कार्मुकम् च बलिनाधिरोपितम्।
निष्प्रभश्च रिपुरास भूभृताम् धूमशेष इव धूमकेतनः॥ ११-८१

tena bhūminihitaikakoṭi tatkārmukam ca balinādhiropitam |
niṣprabhaśca ripurāsa bhūbhṛtām dhūmaśeṣa iva dhūmaketanah || 11-81

11-81. No sooner did Lord Ram put one end of that bow on the ground as a support for bending it so that he could sling the string from the other end, than the fiery countenance of sage Parashuram, the enemy of kings, suddenly faded, and his radiance was reduced to a dull colour of smoke emanating from the embers of a fire that has been extinguished.

Verse no. 82:

तावुभावपि परस्परस्थितौ वर्धमानपरिहीनतेजसौ।
पश्यति स्म जनता दिनात्यये पार्वणौ शशिदिवाकराविव॥ ११-८२

tāvubhāvapi parasparasthitau vardhamānaparihīnatejasau |
paśyati sma janatā dinātyaye pārvaṇau śaśidivākarāviva || 11-82

11-82. The people who were present on the occasion saw Lord Ram and Parashuram standing face-to-face before each other, with the former having his glory enhanced while the other had his glory proportionately reduced. It reminded the beholder of the evening of the full moon night when the light of the sun goes on gradually decreasing while that of the full moon increases till a point of time when the sunlight completely vanishes and is replaced with the cool and soothing light of the full moon.

[Note--In this analogy, Lord Ram is compared to the full moon, while sage Parashuram is likened to the sun. The sun's light, though many times more powerful than that of the moon, is however hot and unwelcome, especially during the hot months of summer, while, on the other hand, the light of the full moon is very welcome as it is soothing, cool and rejuvenating. As the sun sets in the evening, its splendour and radiance sets too, making way for the ascendance of the moon whose light illuminates the sky, and after the suffering of the hot day everyone looks forward for such a night of full moon that would give peace and comfort. It seems that when the time comes for the full moon to rise and illuminate the world with its soothing and pleasant light, the sun voluntarily retires and withdraws its light as it feels ashamed of the harshness of its rays.

Therefore, in a metaphoric way, when the right time came and Lord Ram and sage Parashuram stood facing each other, the glory and radiance of the latter faded away before the former, and the sage felt as all his fire and energy, triggered by his anger and haughtiness, had suddenly been defused, as if a blazing fire is doused by a soothing spray of cold water symbolising the virtues of calmness, politeness and humility that Lord Ram exhibited. The sage realised that though he had been so proud of his achievements till now, his glory was based more on fear of punishment rather than on his polite, noble and amiable manners that the world would have appreciated more, and since these qualities were abundant in Lord Ram in sharp contrast to himself, it was clear to the sage that in changed times and circumstances, Lord Ram is indeed more qualified to have glory and fame than he is.

Hence, the sage wisely withdrew just like the case of the sun quietly withdrawing from the scene when it is the time for the full moon to rise.]

Verse no. 83:

तम् कृपामृदुरवेक्ष्य भार्गवम् राघवः स्खलितवीर्यमात्मनि।

स्वम् च संहितममोघमाशुगम् व्याजहार हरसूनुसंनिभः॥ ११-८३

tam kṛpāmṛduravekṣya bhārgavam rāghavaḥ skhalitavīryamātmani |
svam ca saṁhitamamoghamāśugam vyājahāra harasūnusaṁnibhaḥ || 11-83

11-83. Lord Ram, who was like Kartikeya¹, the son of Lord Shiva, was very valiant, strong and powerful, yet kind-hearted. So the Lord became mellowed when he saw sage Parashuram standing before him like a defeated warrior. The Lord looked at the sage and then at the arrow which the Lord had already mounted on his bow.

[Note--¹Kartikeya is regarded as the patron deity of war, and a symbol of courage and victory. Here Lord Ram is likened to Kartikeya primarily to imply that the Lord embodies the virtues of valour, courage and strength as well as invincibility as he is always victorious. Sage Parashuram, though till now considered invincible, has been subdued by Lord Ram, and seems like a defeated warrior asking for mercy for the first time in his life.

Lord Ram did not wish to unnecessary hurt a Brahmin sage, as it would be an unpardonable sin, especially when sage Parashuram stood humbled and defeated.]

Verse no. 84:

न प्रहर्तुमलमस्मि निर्दयम् विप्र इत्यभिभत्यपि त्वयि।
शंस किम् गतिमनेन पत्रिणा हन्मि लोकमुत ते मखार्जितम्॥ ११-८४

na prahartumalamasmi nirdayam vipra ityabhibhatyapi tvayi |
śaṁsa kim gatimanena patriṇā hanmi lokamuta te makhārjitam || 11-84

11-84. Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram "Look sage, I have already mounted an arrow on the bow. Though you have insulted me and challenged my strength, still I shall not hurt you mindlessly because you are a Brahmin. But since my arrow cannot go in vain, tell me what shall I do with it. Should I use it to stop you from going to any place to do more mischief (like killing some of the kings and threatening others), or should I use it to neutralise all the merits you have accumulated by your doing fire sacrifices and other spiritual practices that empower you to attain higher worlds (i.e. have access to heaven)."

Verse no. 85:

प्रत्युवाच तमृषिर्न तत्त्वतः त्वाम् न वेद्मि पुरुषम् पुरातनम्।
गाम् गतस्य तव धाम वैष्णवम् कोपितो ह्यसि मया दिदृक्षुणा॥ ११-८५

pratyuvāca tamṛṣirna tattvataḥ tvām na vedmi puruṣam purātanam |
gām gatasya tava dhāma vaiṣṇavam kopito hyasi mayā didṛkṣuṇā || 11-85

11-85. Sage Parashuram replied: "Oh Lord! It is not that when I saw you I did not recognise that you are a manifestation of the Supreme Being praised and honoured by the scriptures, but I wanted to make sure if my hunch was indeed correct. That is why I acted the way I did to enrage you and see if you are terrified of me, and then to make myself doubly sure I had given Lord Vishnu's bow to you.

{I thought that if you were an ordinary human prince, you would become scared when you see me in an angry form like all other princes do when they learn of my reputation. But of course, where do I stand in front of the Supreme Being? I am definitely no match for him. Your fearlessness made me quite certain that my hunch was right, yet I wanted to check it further, so I gave you the bow that actually belonged to Lord Vishnu. Since you easily took it and strung it, and have now mounted an arrow on it, which is

not an ordinary feat because only Lord Vishnu can do it, all my doubts have vanished concerning you.}

Verse no. 86:

**भस्मसात्कृतवतः पितृद्विषः पात्रसाच्च वसुधाम् ससागराम्।
आहितो जयविपर्ययोऽपि मे श्लाघ्य एव परमेष्ठिना त्वया॥ ११-८६**

bhasmasātkṛtavataḥ pitṛdviṣaḥ pātrasācca vasudhām sasāgarām |
āhito jayaviparyayo'pi me ślāghya eva parameṣṭhinā tvayā || 11-86

11-86. It is indeed a matter of highest honour and a great privilege for me to have personally met and interacted with the Supreme Being. Besides this, I feel so glad that when the time came for me to surrender my ego and become a humble sage, I did so in front of the Supreme Being. I am not an ordinary sage and Brahmin, for I have repeatedly reduced to ashes members of the race who had been my father's enemies (i.e. the Kshatriya kings), and having vanquished them I had donated the land extending from one ocean to another to Brahmins¹.

[Note--¹Sage Parashuram had subtly warned Lord Ram that he should not become proud of himself for having subdued the sage, and be careful while threatening the sage with a mounted arrow because he (Parashuram) has voluntarily decided to surrender before Lord Ram as he has acknowledged that the Lord was a personified form of the Supreme Being, and not because he is scared of the young prince, for the simple reason that he had the necessary power to overcome Lord Ram should he decide to do so. And to bolster his argument, the sage cited how he had repeatedly vanquished kings and then donated their land parcels to Brahmins. This also means that the sage did not vanquish kings to usurp their lands with a selfish intent, as he had donated all conquered lands as charities to Brahmins.]

Verse no. 87:

**तत् गतिम् मतिमताम् वरेप्सिताम् पुण्यतीर्थगमनाय रक्ष मे।
पीडयिष्यति न माम् खिलीकृता स्वर्गपद्धतिः अभोघलोलुपम्॥ ११-८७**

tat gatim matimatām varepsitām puṇyatīrthagamanāya rakṣa me |
pīdayiṣyati na mām khilīkṛtā svargapaddhatiḥ abhoghalolupam || 11-87

11-87. Oh intelligent and wise Lord Ram! Please don't create any hindrance in my path which would prevent me from going on pilgrimages to holy places. Since I have no desire of enjoying pleasures of the senses, hence if I do not go to heaven it won't effect me and I won't feel sad.

Therefore, out of the two options you can opt for the latter by blocking my way to heaven, but please do not stop me from being able to go on pilgrimages."

Verse no. 88:

प्रत्यपद्यत तथेति राघवः प्राङ्मुखश्च विससर्ज सायकम्।
भार्गवस्य सुकृतोऽपि सोऽभवत् स्वर्गमार्गपरिघो दुरत्ययः॥ ११-८८

pratyapadyata tatheti rāghavaḥ prāṇmukhaśca visasarja sāyakam |
bhārgavasya sukr̥to'pi so'bhavat svargamārgaparigho duratyayaḥ || 11-88

11-88. Lord Ram graciously accepted sage Parashuram's submission, and turning towards the east the Lord shot that arrow. As a result, though sage Parashuram had done great penances and practiced austerities, yet Lord Ram's arrow blocked the sage's path to heaven by becoming a barrier for him for all times to come.

[Note--The sun rises in the east, and the sun's brilliance stands for the splendour of heaven. After the gloom of the night, it appears that the sun emerges from the gates of heaven to light up the world with its light. The sun gradually climbs up in the sky, symbolising a person's journey to heaven when he rises up from this mortal world dominated by ignorance and darkness, and progresses gradually to become enlightened and self-realised which is tantamount to reaching higher states of existence represented by the heaven.]

Verse no. 89:

राघवोऽपि चरणौ तपोनिधेः क्षम्यतामिति वदन्समस्पृशत्।
निर्जितेषु तरसा तरस्विनाम् शत्रुषु प्रणतिरेव कीर्तये॥ ११-८९

rāghavo'pi caraṇau taponidheḥ kṣamyatāmiti vadansamaspr̥śat |
nirjiteṣu tarasā tarasvinām śatruṣu praṇatireva kīrtaye || 11-89

11-89. After that, Lord Ram touched the feet of the great Brahmin sage Parashuram, and asked for forgiveness for all the unpleasant exchanges that had passed between them in show of strength with each other. When a great warrior attains victory over his adversary by relying on his personal strength, valour and powers, and then shows the greatness of his heart and the noble side of his character by excusing and forgiving the adversary by showing humility and kindness to him, then the valiant victor's glory certainly increases and his fame is enhanced.

[Note--When a victor forgives one whom he has subdued, instead of venting his wrath on the latter by punishing him, then the world lauds the victor's noble character and praises him for his goodness. In this case, Lord Ram not only forgives sage Parashuram for his initial outburst of impertinence, but also bows down before the sage to touch his feet and ask the sage to forgive him for speaking rudely with a Brahmin sage of Parashuram's exalted stature, the sage felt overwhelmed and became emotional because he himself has acknowledged that Lord Ram was a personified form of the Supreme Being. And if the

Supreme Being himself asks for pardon and bows down to touch a sage's feet to show how much respect he has for sages and Brahmins, then surely Parashuram felt extremely thrilled and joyful.]

Verse no. 90:

राजसत्वमवधूय मातृकम् पित्र्यमस्मि गमितः शमम् यदा।
नन्वनिन्दितफलो मम त्वया निग्रहोऽप्ययमनुगृहीकृतः॥ ११-९०

rājasatvamavadhūya mātṛkam pitryamasmi gamitaḥ śamam yadā |
nanvaninditaphalo mama tvayā nigraho'pyayamanugṛhīkṛtaḥ || 11-90

11-90. The grateful sage Parashuram told Lord Ram: "Oh Lord! By granting me this permission by way of a reward (of having unrestricted access to holy places where I can go unhindered for pilgrimage), you have graciously done a great favour to me. It is because now you have terminated the somewhat bad and negative qualities of Raja Guna that I had inherited from my Kshatriya mother (i.e. Renuka), and replaced them with good and positive qualities of Sata Guna that befits a son of a Brahmin father (i.e. Jamdagni).

[Note--The Kshatriya race is known for its warrior qualities, which implies that they are fighters who have no regret in killing others. They would become angry and vengeful at the slightest provocation, and do not believe in forgiving their adversaries. They would use all tricks of polity, such as Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda to subdue their opponents even if that meant using unfair means. The Kshatriya race is prone to becoming haughty, arrogant and egoist by virtue of their successful exploits. They are selfish, and have no compunction in destroying others if such acts bring wealth, prosperity, fame and glory to them. This is called Raja Guna.

The Brahmin class, on the contrary, is usually calm, learned and wise. They have good qualities in abundance, and follow Dharma diligently. They would abhor bloodshed and harming others just for fulfilling their vested interests.

So here, sage Parashuram thanks Lord Ram for neutralising his haughtiness and terminating his warrior-class characteristics for all times to come, thereby making him a true Brahmin saint. This is particularly true as the Lord allowed the sage to go on doing his religious practices, such as going on pilgrimages and continuing with his penances and austerities. The sage was aware that with this freedom, he would regain his lost exalted stature as a great Brahmin sage which he had lost by his indulging in relentless blood shedding by killing Kshatriya kings and princes. The sage at last realised that what he had been doing for so long was against the characters and values of a Brahmin sage, so now he must make amends for his past sins. He thanked Lord Ram for making him aware of his follies, and bringing him to the ground.]

Verse no. 91:

साधयाम्यहमविघ्नमस्तु ते देवकार्यमुपपादयिष्यतः।

उचिवानिति वचः सलक्ष्मणम् लक्ष्मणाग्रजमृषितिरोदधे॥ ११-९१

sādhayāmyahamavighnamastu te devakāryamupapādayiṣyataḥ |
ūcivāniti vacaḥ salakṣmaṇam lakṣmaṇāgrajamṛṣitirodadhe || 11-91

11.91. Now I take your permission to leave. May you be blessed with unhindered success in completing the task of the gods (which is to eliminate the demons) for which you have descended on this earth."

Saying thus, sage Parashuram disappeared from view (i.e. he quietly went away)¹ after paying his respects to Lord Ram and Laxman.

[Note--¹When sage Parashuram had arrived, he came like a howling storm, but when he went away he did so quietly as if the storm had dissipated all its energy, and the velocity of the wind subsides to become a soft and pleasant breeze.]

Verse no. 92:

तस्मिन्गते विजयिनम् परिरभ्य रामम् स्नेहादमन्यत पिता पुनरेव जातम्।

तस्याभवत्क्षणशुचः परितोषलाभः कक्षाग्निलङ्घिततरोरिव वृष्टिपातः॥ ११-९२

tasmingate vijayinam parirabhya rāmam snehādamanyata pitā punareva jātam |
tasyābhavatksaṇaśucaḥ paritoṣalābhaḥ kakṣāgnilaṅghitataroriva vṛṣṭipātaḥ || 11-92

11-92. When the angry sage Parashuram had gone away, king Dashrath was overwhelmed with joy. He affectionately embraced Lord Ram as if his son had got a new life. This sudden arrival of danger and its as sudden a disappearance made Dashrath so happy and overjoyed as if the trees of a forest that face extinction due to a raging wildfire suddenly find reprieve because of rainfall (which douses the fire and saves the trees from annihilation).

Verse no. 93:

अथ पथि गमयित्वा क्लृप्तारम्योपकार्ये कतिचिदवनिपालः शर्वरीः शर्वकल्पः।

पुरमविशदयोध्याम् मैथिलीदर्शनीनाम् कुवलयितगवाक्षाम् लोचनैरङ्गनानाम्॥ ११-९३

atha pathi gamayitvā kṛptaramyopakārye katicidavanipālaḥ śarvarīḥ śarvakalpaḥ |
puramaviśadayodhyām maithilīdarśanīnām kuvalayitagavākṣām
locanairāṅganānām || 11-93

8-93. Then, king Dashrath resumed his journey to his capital city (of Ayodhya). He spent a few nights on the way and camped in elaborately provided and comfortable tents that had been erected for his convenience.

Finally he arrived in Ayodhya where the eyes of charming ladies who had crowded on balconies and peeped through windows to have a glimpse of Sita, their future queen, resembled so many lotus flowers welcoming Sita on her maiden visit to the city.

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये एकादशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye ekādaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 11th Canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 12, verse nos. 1-104:

Introduction

King Dashrath returned to Ayodhya with the marriage party of his four sons and their brides. The king ruled for many years. By-and-by he became old and decided to appoint his eldest son Lord Ram as the next ruler of the kingdom. This news spread like wildfire and made all the citizens extremely happy as they loved Lord Ram. But fate had something different in store, for Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat and a favourite queen of the king, became jealous as she wanted her son to ascend the throne. So she threw tantrums and forced the king to send Lord Ram to a forest exile for fourteen years so that the decks are cleared for Bharat's anointment as the heir-apparent.

Though on the face of it this development was most unwarranted and ignominious as it had cast an indelible dark scar on the royal family's untainted reputation, but it fit in well from the perspective of the good of the world and help Lord Ram to fulfil the divine mandate with which Lord Vishnu had come down to earth in the Lord's form, which was to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons. It would not have been possible without Lord Ram going to the forest to get rid of them one by one.

It so happened that during the ancient battle between the gods and the demons, king Dashrath had fought on the side of the gods, and during this battle Kaikeyi had played a key role to save the life of the king. Pleased, the king had promised her two boons, which she could redeem anytime. Kaikeyi had kept them pending, and now she compelled the king to fulfil his two promises. Kaikeyi asked that her first wish was that her son Bharat be appointed next king, and that her second wish was that Lord Ram be sent to the forest for fourteen years.

The king was stunned and left speechless. But he was a righteous and truthful man who would keep his words no matter what the consequences were. So therefore, Lord Ram was made to go to the forest. The Lord's wife Sita and his brother Laxman decided to

accompany him. The three proceeded to the forest. Lord Ram had no ill-will against anyone, for the Lord had excellent virtues of equanimity, forgiveness and tolerance; he treated all circumstances alike, and therefore for him going to the forest was as good as staying in the capital. Besides that, privately he knew that it was time for him to fulfil the divine mandate for which he had come down to earth--i.e. the elimination of the demons.

Meanwhile, the grieving king died. At that time, Bharat was in his maternal uncle's place, so the ministers of the kingdom sent an urgent message for him to come back immediately. When Bharat learnt about the death of his father and the cause of it, which was Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman going to the forest due to the jealousy of his mother Kaikeyi, he became furious. He not only rebuked his mother sternly, using harsh words for her, but developed hatred for her for all times to come. He was of a noble temperament, and a most upright and righteous person. The thought that his dear brother, Lord Ram, had been sent to the forest due to his mother's selfishness and greed for power, he developed repugnance for the wealth of the kingdom, deciding that he would have nothing to do with it. If Lord Ram could live in the forest, then he too can live like an ascetic.

Bharat decided that he would immediately go to the forest and beg Lord Ram for forgiveness, tell the Lord that he is not a party to his mother's evil design, and request the Lord to return home and ascend the throne without a second thought.

So therefore, Bharat prepared a large procession and headed to Chitrakoot where Lord Ram lived at that time. Bharat took along all paraphernalia for anointment of the Lord in the forest itself. Lord Ram affectionately embraced Bharat and assured the latter that he need not worry as the Lord loved him more than anyone else, and that the Lord knows that Bharat is not guilty of any mischief. But since their father is no more now, it would not be proper for the Lord to disobey his father's commands whereby he was to stay in the forest for fourteen years. Lord Ram, however, promised Bharat that as soon as this period is over, he will come back to accept the crown of the kingdom. Bharat asked for some token to represent the Lord during his absence, so Lord Ram gave him his wooden sandals. Bharat returned to Ayodhya with a heavy heart, and placed Lord Ram's sandals on the throne while he himself retired to a suburb of Ayodhya, at a place known as Nandigram, and started living as an ascetic. His younger brother Shatrughan looked after the affairs of the kingdom in consultation with him.

One day, Indra's son Jayant assumed the form of a crow and scratched Sita's breasts with his claws to tease Lord Ram. When the Lord saw blood oozing out from the wound, he shot a twig at Jayant to symbolise his arrow in order to punish him, and the result was that one eye of Jayant was taken out.

Lord Ram left Chitrakoot and proceeded ahead in the forest. He arrived at sage Atri's hermitage where the sage's wife Anusuiya advised Sita on the duties of a wife, and the principles of service and loyalty that she must practice with respect to her husband.

From there, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman proceeded to Panchvati in the deep forest and began living there. One day, a demoness named Supernakha, a sister of the demon king Ravana, came to the Lord's hermitage and proposed that he establish a marital relationship with her. It was a ridiculous proposition, so Lord Ram asked Laxman to chop-off her ears and nose to deform her as punishment as well as to let the world know what kind of woman she was. She rushed for help to the demons Khar, Dushan, Trishira etc. and asked them to take revenge. They attacked Lord Ram and Laxman with a huge demon army. In the battle that ensued, every demon warrior was slayed by Lord Ram.

Astonished and peeved at this development, because she had never expected that mighty demons would be so easily done away with, the stunned Supernakha rushed to Lanka to inform Ravana. Flabbergasted, the demon king decided to do something as it was a direct challenge to his authority.

Ravana forced Marich to assume the form of a golden deer so that he could use some trick to abduct Sita to settle scores with Lord Ram. So, Ravana took Sita forcibly and held her captive in Lanka. On the way, however, he was intercepted by Jatayu, an old but powerful vulture. Jatayu tried to free Sita from Ravana's clutches, but the demon king cut-off his wings and Jatayu fell down on the ground gravely wounded.

When Lord Ram and Laxman set out to search for Sita, they met Jatayu who informed them about Ravana taking her away and proceeding in the southern direction where the island of Lanka was located. Lord Ram performed the last rites of Jatayu, and proceeded in the south direction as advised by him.

The two brothers reached the kingdom of monkeys and bears, known as Kishkindha. There, they met Hanuman who was instrumental in forging a bond of friendship between Lord Ram and the kingdom's prince Sugriva. When Lord Ram learnt how Baali, Sugriva's elder brother, had usurped the crown by chasing his younger brother out to live in exile, the Lord helped his friend Sugriva get back his right to the throne of Kishkindha by slaying Baali. Sugriva expressed his gratitude to the Lord and promised that he will not only help the Lord find the whereabouts of Sita but employ all the resources at his command to restore her to him.

Many groups of monkeys and bears were sent in all the directions to search for Sita. One such group consisting of Hanuman, Angad, Jamvant, Nala, Neel etc. went in the southern direction till they arrived on the shore of the southern ocean. The vast expanse of the ocean blocked their way. Then Hanuman made a giant leap across the ocean to reach Lanka. He brought back Sita's news. Then Lord Ram along with a mighty army of Kishkindha launched a campaign to free Sita, and they crossed the ocean by constructing a bridge across it. A no-holds barred fierce war broke out between the army of Lord Ram and the demon army of Ravana.

When Indra, the king of gods, observed that Lord Ram was on foot while Ravana rode a chariot, he sent his own chariot driven by Matali, Indra's charioteer. In the final stages of the war, a blood-cuddling fierce battle took place between Lord Ram and Ravana. In the

end, Ravana fell to arrows of Lord Ram. Immediately, as soon as Ravana died, Lord Ram ended the war by removing the string from his bow. Matali was told to go back to Indra in the heaven.

After that, Lord Ram crowned Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, as the king of Lanka. Sita was purified through the fire test. Finally, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, along with many chief commanders of the monkey and bear army such as Hanuman, Sugriv, Angad, Jamvant etc. as well as Vibhishan, the new king of Lanka, headed home to Ayodhya aboard the Pushpak plane that was available in Lanka.

This part of the story spans Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, and Lanka Kand of all major versions of the story of the Ramayana, such as Ram Charit Manas written by Goswami Tulsidas, Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, and the famous Valmiki's Ramayana.

That said, now let us proceed with our reading of this Chapter no. 12 from Raghuvansham of Kalidas.

Verse no. 1:

निर्विष्टविषयस्नेहः स दशान्तमुपेयिवान्।

आसीदासन्ननिर्वाणः प्रदीपार्चिरिवोषसि॥ १२-१

nirviṣṭaviṣayasnehaḥ sa daśāntamupeyivān|
āsīdāsannanirvāṇaḥ pradīpārcirivoṣasi || 12-1

12-1. King Dashrath had enjoyed a successful and fruitful life, with all the pleasures of the sense organs at his disposal. But as time passed, old age crept in and made him realise that the time for his death was not far away. His condition was like that of a lamp that has shown bright for a very long time every morning, but gradually its oil was exhausted and its wick nearly consumed, indicating that the lamp was about to extinguish.

[Note--King Dashrath is compared to a lamp in the morning, instead of one in the evening, as normally it should have been, because this verse is talking about his twilight days when his end was near. Why is it so?

There are many ways to interpret this verse. One: it is to indicate that just like each morning opens the door for a bright day when a man does so many constructive and noble things, Dashrath's virtuous life had been full of good activities and noble deeds. He had not wasted a single day in laziness, and had never allowed the darkness of negativity come in his way. The lamp of the evening would imply coming of the darkness of the night, while the lamp of the morning implies the coming of a bright new day ahead.

Two: king Dashrath belonged to the 'solar race', a race directly descending from the sun-god. Hence, this symbolism of the 'lamp of the morning' is very apt.

Three: a lamp is lighted in the evening hours, burns through the night, and by morning its oil is consumed and wick exhausted, resulting in the lamp getting

extinguished in the morning hours. Metaphorically, king Dashrath took birth at a time when the glory of the Ikshwaku race was on the decline, as represented by the declining light of the day, and by his deeds and actions the king established himself and his glory in the world just as the lighted lamp makes its presence felt in the darkness of the night. King Dashrath's Sata Gunas, i.e. good qualities representing his virtues, character and righteous way of life illuminated the world and removed the darkness symbolising the Tama Guna that dominated it.

Four: the king was to be rewarded for his excellence and fellowship of Dharma in the form of having four glorious sons, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, who would be the four wheels of the radiant chariot symbolising the virtues of Dharma. The light of four lamps (represented by the four brothers) is surely and definitely brighter than one single lamp (represented by king Dashrath), and when one of these lamps is like the sun itself (here representing Lord Ram), there is no limit to the intensity of illumination that they would spread all around. To make way for these four lamps, the single lamp had to be removed, metaphorically implying that king Dashrath had to step aside and make space so that the glory of Lord Ram and his three brothers can shine brilliantly in this world. With the ascendance of four noble brothers, led by Lord Ram, the glory and fame of the Ikshwaku race spread far and wide, reaching its pinnacle symbolised by the bright light of the day that follows the night-lamp's extinguishing as soon as the day breaks and the sun rises.]

Verse no. 2:

तम् कर्णमूलमागत्य रामे श्रीर्न्यस्यतामिति।

कैकेयीशङ्कयेवाह पलितच्छद्मना जरा॥ १२-२

tam karṇamūlamāgatya rāme śrīrnyasyatāmiti|
kaikeyīśaṅkayevāha palitacchadmanā jarā || 12-2

12-2. The hairs around the king's ears had turned grey, as if old age, worried about Kaikeyi's evil nature, had disguised itself in this way to whisper a warning to the king that he must not waste time any more, and crown Lord Ram as the next king before it is too late.

[Note--This idea is expressly stated, almost in the same way, in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 2.

Fate and Providence knew that Kaikeyi is sure to create some kind of nuisance and prevent Lord Ram from ascending the throne of the kingdom. The king remained oblivious of this danger as he loved Kaikeyi and trusted her. He could never imagine that his favourite wife Kaikeyi would one day betray his trust in her, and become an instrument of his death. The grey hair was a warning signal to him that he should no longer keep postponing the appointment of his heir to the throne in the belief and confidence that it was natural that his eldest son, Lord Ram, would automatically ascend the throne in case something happens to him. If he did not complete the process personally while the things are favourably going his way, then Kaikeyi is sure to throw a

spanner in the wheel and stop Lord Ram from being crowned as the next king of Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 3:

सा पौरान्पौरकान्तस्य रामस्याभ्युदयश्रुतिः।

प्रत्येकम् हृदयांचक्रे कुल्येवोद्यानपादपान्॥ १२-३

sā paurānpaurakāntasya rāmasyābhyudayaśrutiḥ|
pratyekam hrādayāñcakre kulyevodyānapādapān || 12-3

12-3. Just like the case of the trees of a garden feeling refreshed when water reaches them through water-channels meant for watering plants of the garden, so likewise when the news of Lord Ram's elevation to the throne of the kingdom to become the next king reached the citizens of Ayodhya, they were extremely delighted in their hearts and welcomed the news with cheer.

Verse no.4:

तस्याभिषेकसंभारम् कल्पितम् क्रूरनिश्चया।

दूषयामास कैकेयी शोकोष्णैः पार्थिवाश्रुभिः॥ १२-४

tasyābhiṣekasambhāram kalpitam krūraniścayā|
dūṣayāmāsa kaikeyī śokoṣṇaiḥ pāthivāśrubhiḥ || 12-4

12-4. Kaikeyi, who was merciless and wicked to the core of her heart, threw such a tantrum and spun such a crooked yarn of mischief that king Dashrath was plunged in grief and shed so much tears that symbolically polluted all the auspicious paraphernalia that had been arranged for the crowning ceremony of Lord Ram¹.

{What was supposed to be an occasion for celebration, suddenly turned into a moment of grief and lamentation. All the auspicious things arranged for the elaborate ceremony to be held for Lord Ram's coronation, suddenly lay like a burden and turned into an eye-sore due to Kaikeyi's ill intent. What did Kaikeyi want? The answer is given in verse no. 6 herein below.}

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

Verse no. 5:

सा किलाशवासिता चण्डी भर्त्रा तत् संश्रुतौ वरौ।

उद्ववामेन्द्रसिक्ता भूर्बिलमगनाविवोरगौ॥ १२-५

sā kilāśvāsītā caṇḍī bhartrā tat saṁśrutau varau|
udvavāmendrasiktā bhūrbilamagnāvivoragau || 12-5

12-5. Kaikeyi, who was very furious, asked king Dashrath to immediately redeem two promises he had made to her in the past¹. The harsh and merciless words claiming redemption of these two pending promises came out of Kaikeyi's mouth as if two poisonous serpents come out of their holes after torrential rain soaks the earth.

[Note--¹The story of king Dashrath promising Kaikeyi two boons is briefly as follows: It so happened that during the ancient battle between the gods and the demons, king Dashrath had fought on the side of the gods, and during this battle Kaikeyi had played a key role to save the life of the king. Pleased, the king had promised her two boons, which she could redeem anytime. Kaikeyi had kept them pending, and now she compelled the king to fulfil his two promises. Kaikeyi asked that her first wish was that her son Bharat be appointed next king, and that her second wish was that Lord Ram be sent to the forest for fourteen years.

²After heavy rainfall, all subterranean crevices and fissures are filled with rain-water, forcing reptiles such as snakes to emerge from their holes. In this analogy, Kaikeyi's harsh and merciless words demanding fulfilment of her two pending boons are likened to two poisonous snakes emerging from their holes after rainfall.]

Verse no. 6:

तयोश्चतुर्दशैकेन रामम् प्राव्राजयत्समाः।
द्वितीयेन सुतस्यैच्छद्वैधव्यैकफलाम् श्रियम्॥ १२-६

tayoścaturdaśaikena rāmam prāvrājayatsamāḥ|
dvitīyena sutasyaicchadvaidhavyaikaphalām śriyam || 12-6

12-6. Out of the two boons Kaikeyi wished to be redeemed, one was that Lord Ram should go to the forest for fourteen years, and the other was that her son Bharat should get the crown and be appointed as the king. But all her intentions turned futile and brought nothing but infamy and misfortune to her, as she soon became a widow (because king Dashrath died from the shock and grief of sending Lord Ram to the forest)², and she never got her wish fulfilled by having her son crowned as a king so that she would enjoy all the privileges of being the mother of the king (as Bharat refused to accept the crown)³.

[Note--Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 36.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 155; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 180.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 177-Doha no. 178; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 181-to Doha no. 183.]

Verse no. 7:

**पित्रा दत्तम् रुदन्नामः प्राङ्महीम् प्रत्यपद्यत।
पश्चाद्वनाय गच्छेति तदाज्ञाम् मुदितोऽग्रहीत्॥ १२-७**

pitṛā dattam rudanrāmaḥ prāṅmahīm pratyapadyata|
paścādvānāya gaccheti tadājñām mudito'grahīt || 12-7

12-7. When Lord Ram was asked to accept the crown, he had been very reluctant and felt sad at this offer¹, but when he was asked to go the forest, the Lord felt very glad and cheerfully accepted it².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42; (ii) Doha no. 165 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Why was Lord Ram feeling sorry when he learnt that he was to get the crown of the kingdom as per his father's wish, and why was he so happy when asked to go to the forest instead? The answer is obvious: Lord Ram was a human manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and he had come to earth with a special mandate to eliminate the demons led by Ravana. It would not have been possible if he had become a king, for then the demon king Ravana would go to hide somewhere if the Lord went with a mighty army to defeat him.

Another reason is that Ravana had a boon from the creator Brahma according to which he was to die at the hands of a human being and monkeys. The Lord had to take an army of 'monkeys', and not of 'humans', with him to eliminate Ravana, and an army of monkeys was only to be found in deep forests of the south. Hence, it was imperative for Lord Ram to go all the way to the kingdom of monkeys and bears in Kishkindha so that conditions of Brahma's boons could be met.]

Verse no. 8:

**दधतो मङ्गलक्षौमे वसानस्य च वल्कले।
ददृशुर्विस्मितास्तस्य मुखरागम् समम् जनाः॥ १२-८**

dadhato maṅgalakṣaume vasānasya ca valkale|
dadṛśuṛvismitāstasya mukharāgam samam janāḥ || 12-8

12-8. The people were amazed at the calm and composed expression on Lord Ram's face under both the contrasting circumstances--viz. when he wore royal silk robes as the prince of the kingdom, and when he shortly discarded them to change into hand-made coarse garments (such as from jute or clothing made from the bark of a tree) befitting a forest-dweller¹. This clearly indicated that Lord practiced exemplary virtues of equanimity and dispassion under all circumstances.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165. Lord Ram neither showed happiness when he was informed that the king has decided to make him his heir and crown him as the next monarch, nor did he show anger and frustration when the same king suddenly asked him to go to the forest for no fault of his. Lord Ram was happy either way.]

Verse no. 9:

**स सीतालक्ष्मणसखः सत्याद्गुरुमलोपयन्।
विवेश दण्डकारण्यम् प्रत्येकम् च सताम् मनः॥ १२-९**

sa sītālakṣmaṇasakhaḥ satyādgurumalopayan|
viveśa daṇḍakāraṇyam pratyekam ca satām manaḥ || 12-9

12-9. In his endeavour to obey his father, the righteous Lord Ram, accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Laxman, went away calmly obediently to enter the Dandak forest, which also enabled the Lord to enter the heart of all the citizens.

{By his willingness to obey his father's commands, Lord Ram found a place in the hearts of the subjects of his kingdom who very much appreciated the Lord's decision to uphold the virtue of obedience to one's father. If there was another prince in Lord Ram's place, and the platter of kingship was abruptly snatched from him, he would certainly have revolted. But the Lord peacefully and obediently accepted his father's will. Every single individual liked this goodness of character of the Lord.}

Verse no. 10:

**राजापि तद्वियोगार्तः स्मृत्वा शापम् स्वकर्मजम्।
शरीरत्यागमात्रेण शुद्धिलाभमन्यत॥ १२-१०**

rājāpi tadviyogārtah smṛtvā śāpam svakarmajam|
śarīratyāgamātreṇa śuddhilābhamanyata || 12-10

12-10. King Dashrath plunged in an ocean of grief upon separation from his beloved son Lord Ram. He remembered the curse of a sage's son (named Shrawan Kumar) that the king had brought upon himself due to his own deeds¹. When he recalled that curse, he knew that the only way to wash the sin that caused the curse was to die.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 155. The context of this narration is Dasrath's death in grief of separation from his most beloved son, Lord Ram. Dasrath tell this story of Shrawan Kumar to Kaushalya by way of an explanation as to why the things had taken such an unexpected and dramatic but nasty turn, which resulted in the present situation when he was dying in grief of separation from his dearest son, Lord Ram, without any hope of recourse to any sort of relief of any kind.

The story behind the curse that king Dashrath had incurred upon himself is this: During his younger days, Dashrath had gone hunting in the forests surrounding Ayodhya during one night, and while searching for game he went near the banks of river Saryu. It was dark. From a distance he heard a soft sound resembling the trumpet of a young elephant emanating from the direction of the river. Right at that time, a young hermit named Shrawan Kumar had gone to the river to fill a pitcher of water for his blind and thirsty parents whom he was taking on a pilgrimage. The sound which Dashrath mistook for the soft trumpet of an elephant was actually made by the gurgling of water as it filled a narrow-necked pitcher which Shrawan Kumar was filling to take to quench the thirst of his aged parents who were waiting for him to bring water for them at some safe distance away.

As is quite natural with young princes who are out hunting within their domain, Dashrath did not think twice nor did he bother to investigate the source of the sound before shooting a sharp arrow in the direction of the source of the sound. He had thought that if he killed this elephant with his shot, he would take it as a trophy back to the palace to show everyone how good an archer and a sharpshooter he was.

But unfortunately for Dasrath, the arrow struck Shrawan Kumar directly. The pious hermit did not mind his own death, but was worried that he failed to take drinking water for his thirsty parents who were totally dependent upon him as they were blind.

So, when Dashrath came to see what game he had shot down, he was for a mortal shock to find that he had killed a hermit, who lay mortally wounded on the ground, with a half-filled pitcher of water lying near him. Seeing Dashrath, Shrawan Kumar briefed him about the whole situation, and implored the young prince not to waste time but to fill the pitcher with water and take it to his parents, asking them to quench their thirst. If they wish to know what happened to their son, then Dasrath must tell them truthfully the whole event as it happened.

Making this last wish to Dashrath, the young hermit, Shrawan Kumar, died. Shocked and confounded beyond measure, Dashrath did as asked by the dying hermit, as he feared severe repercussions on him if he failed to carry out the last wish of a dying man.

When Dashrath approached the blind parents of Shrawan Kumar and asked them to drink water, they could immediately recognize from his voice that he was not their son. When asked who he was and what had happened to their son, Dashrath narrated everything. The distraught and utterly crestfallen parents then asked Dashrath to take them to the place where their son Shrawan Kumar's body lay. Upon reaching the spot, the two elderly parents of Shrawan Kumar wailed and lamented gravely, and out of grief for their son they died too. But at the time of death, they cursed Dashrath that one day he would be separated from his son whom he loved the most, and then he too would die out

of grief for him even as they (the two elderly couple) are dying in grief of their own son Shrawan Kumar.

It is this incident that Dashrath is reminded of at this hour of his own death.

This story of Shrawan Kumar is narrated in detail by king Dasrath of Ayodhya to his queen Kaushalya in (a) Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto nos. 63-64; and (b) Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 19-40.]

Verse no. 11:

विप्रोषितकुमारम् तद्राज्यमस्तमितेश्वरम्।

रन्ध्रान्वेषणदक्षाणाम् दिवषामामिषतताम् ययौ॥ १२-११

viproṣitakumāram tadrājyamastamiteśvaram|

randhrānveṣaṇadakṣāṇām divṣāmāmiṣatatām yayau || 12-11

12-11. The kingdom whose king had died, and from which all the princes had gone away¹, literally became orphaned. Such a kingdom which does not have anyone to protect it and safeguard its interests becomes an easy prey to jealous enemies who would use this void to attack it and make good of the opportunity.

[Note--¹Ayodhya's king Dashrath had died, and his four sons were out of the kingdom. Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to the forest, and their other two siblings, Bharat and Shatrughan, had gone to visit their maternal uncle's place. This created a void which the enemies of the kingdom would like to exploit.]

Verse no. 12:

अथानाथाः प्रकृतयो मातृबन्धुनिवासिनम्।

मौलैरानाययामासुर्भरतम् स्तम्भिताश्रुभिः॥ १२-१२

athānāthāḥ prakṛtayo mātṛbandhunivāsinam|

maulairānāyayāmāsurbharatam stambhitāśrubhiḥ || 12-12

12-12. The loyal ministers of the kingdom sent reliable messengers, who were intelligent enough to keep the secret to themselves and resilient enough to hide their tears of grief, to go and fetch Bharat from his maternal uncle's place forthwith.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 157. These messengers were briefed that they were not to tell Bharat about anything that had happened back home in Ayodhya, but just tell him that the royal priest, sage Vashistha, wants to meet him urgently.]

Verse no. 13:

श्रुत्वा तथाविधम् मृत्युम् कैकेयीतनयः पितुः।
मातुर्न केवलम् स्वस्याः श्रियोऽप्यासीत्पराङ्मुखः॥ १२-१३

śrutvā tathāvidham mṛtyum kaikeyītanayaḥ pituḥ|
māturna kevalam svasyāḥ śriyo'pyāsītparāṇmukhaḥ || 12-13

12-13. When Bharat returned home and learnt of the developments and the death of his father, he was rudely shaken to such an extent that he not only developed hatred for his mother Kaikeyi and turned his face away from her, but also began to loathe the crown and the privileges of kingship associated with it (for all times to come).

[Note--When Bharat came to know that the cause of his father's death and the forest exile of his dear brother Lord Ram, with whom Sita and Laxman too had gone away, was the greed of crown of his wicked mother Kaikeyi, he was speechless. He was dumbfounded and decided that very moment that he would have nothing to do with either her (Kaikeyi) nor the crown the greed for which had been at the center of all this mischief. He was overwhelmed with grief and dismay, and lamented sorely that all this misfortune had unfolded in his name.

Ram Charit Manas describes vividly how Bharat had scolded his mother, and how he had flatly spurned the crown, saying that it rightly belonged to Lord Ram and not to him. Refer respectively to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 160-to Doha no. 162; and (ii) Doha no. 177-to Doha no. 183.]

Verse no. 14:

ससैन्यश्चान्वगाद्रामम् दर्शितानाश्रमालयैः।
तस्य पश्यन्ससौमित्रेरुदश्रुर्वसतिद्रुमान्॥ १२-१४

sasainyaścānvagādrāmam darśitānāśramālayaiḥ|
tasya paśyansasaumitrerudaśrurvasatidrumān || 12-14

12-14. Bharat collected an army and embarked on a mission to search for Lord Ram in the forest¹. When the dwellers of road-side hermitages showed Bharat the trees in whose shade Lord Ram had rested for a while before moving ahead, tears swelled and dropped from Bharat's eyes².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no.186-to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 188.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 199; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 216; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 221.]

Verse no. 15:

चित्रकूटवनस्थम् च कथितस्वर्गतिर्गुरोः।

लक्ष्म्या निमन्त्रयांचक्रे तमनुच्छिष्टसंपदा॥ १२-१५

citrakūṭavanastham ca kathitasvargatirguroḥ|

lakṣmyā nimantrayāṁcakre tamanucchiṣṭasāmpadā || 12-15

12-15. When Bharat reached Chitrakoot where Lord Ram resided at that time, he informed the Lord about the death of their father (Dashrath)¹. Bharat told the Lord that he has not touched the crown, and that he should return home and accept the throne, and look after the affairs of the kingdom.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 247.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 268-to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 268.

Bharat told Lord Ram that he has brought along all the paraphernalia needed for anointing the Lord as the king. But in case the Lord was reluctant to return because of his father's orders, then let Laxman return home and he (Bharat) would replace him and accompany the Lord in the forest. Another option was to let the three brothers (Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman) stay in the forest, and Lord Ram and Sita return home. This clearly showed Bharat's sincerity.]

Verse no. 16:

स हि प्रथमजे तस्मिन्नकृतश्रीपरिग्रहे।

परिवेत्तारमात्मानम् मेने स्वीकरणाद्भुवः॥ १२-१६

sa hi prathamaje tasminnakṛtāśrīparigrahe|

parivettāramātmānam mene svīkaraṇādbhuvāḥ || 12-16

12-16. Bharat thought to himself that religious scriptures have prohibited the younger brother from marrying before his elder brother does, and such a marriage is considered as wrong and foul, as it violates the strictures of the religious scriptures. A king is regarded as a husband in relation to his kingdom just like the case of a married man is regarded as the husband of his wife.

Therefore, since Bharat was the younger brother of Lord Ram, it would be outright sinful for him to accept the crown of the kingdom and become its king when his elder brother Lord Ram, the rightful claimant of the throne, was not allowed to do so, or that the Lord was not given the crown in spite of his being present in the kingdom.

Verse no. 17:

तमशक्यमपाक्रष्टुम् निदेशात्स्वर्गिणः पितुः।

ययाचे पादुके पश्चात्कर्तुम् राज्याधिदेवते॥ १२-१७

tamaśakyamapākraṣṭum nideśātsvargiṇaḥ pituḥ|
yayāce pāduke paścātkartum rājyādhidevate || 12-17

12-17. But Lord Ram did not budge from his resolve to obey his father's words (to stay in the forest for fourteen years). Finding no other alternative, Bharat requested Lord Ram to give his wooden sandals as a token to represent him, and pledged that he (Bharat) would install them on the throne and carry out his duties of looking after the affairs of the kingdom as a faithful servant on behalf of the Lord¹.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 316; and (ii) Doha no. 323; (iii) Doha no. 325.]

Verse no. 18:

स विसृष्टस्तथेत्युक्त्वा भ्रात्रा नैवाविशत्पुरीम्।

नन्दिग्रामगतस्तस्य राज्यम् न्यासमिवाभुनक्॥ १२-१८

sa visrṣṭastathetyuktvā bhrātrā naivāviśatpurīm|
nandigrāmagatastasya rājyam nyāsamivābhunak || 12-18

12-18. Lord Ram agreed with Bharat's request and gave the latter his wooden sandals. Bharat returned home but did not enter the city. He had the Lord's sandals installed on the throne, and himself retired to the outskirts of the city to a place called Nandigram from where he looked after the affairs of the kingdom as a custodian¹.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 323-to Doha no. 325.]

Verse no. 19:

दृढभक्तिरिति ज्येष्ठे राज्यतृष्णापराङ्मुखः।

मातुः पापस्य भरतः प्रायश्चित्तमिवाकरोत्॥ १२-१९

dr̥ḍhabhaktiriti jyeṣṭhe rājyatṛṣṇāparāṇmukhaḥ|
mātuḥ pāpasya bharataḥ prāyaścittamivākarot || 12-19

12-19. In this way, by declining to accept the crown, renouncing all attachment with the material pleasures of the world, and affirming his unequivocal devotion for Lord Ram, Bharat not only showed the purity of heart and the integrity of his character beyond any doubt, but also did atonement to clear his name from the ignominy brought to him by the sins of his mother Kaikeyi.

[Note--By his noble behaviour, Bharat proved to the world that he had no role to play in the dirty scheme of his wicked mother who had been instrumental in the death of king Dashrath, as well as sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest. The citizens had originally doubted Bharat's integrity and thought that he was definitely involved in the conspiracy, and there was a quiet murmur in this connection¹. But when Bharat openly rebuked his mother Kaikeyi and said that he would not like to see her face for the rest of his life², and declared his intention to refuse the crown and go and bring Lord Ram back from the forest, he endeared himself to all the citizens of Ayodhya³. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) ¹Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48; (ii) ²Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 161-to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 162; (iii) and ³Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 185.

The fact that Bharat did not talk or see the face of Kaikeyi as long as he lived is explicitly mentioned in Tulsidas' Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.]

Verse no. 20:

रामोऽपि सह वैदेह्या वने वन्येन वर्तयन्।

चचार सानुजः शान्तो वृद्धेक्ष्वाकुव्रतम् युवा॥ १२-२०

rāmo'pi saha vaidehyā vane vanyena vartayan|
cacāra sānujaḥ śānto vṛddheḥṣvākuvratam yuvā || 12-20

12-20. In the meantime, Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, began to live a life of austerity, abstaining from all pleasures of the senses and renouncing all attachment with the material charms of the world, even though they were young in age, a time when usually youth like to enjoy the world and its pleasures. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman's life of austerity and penance was in sharp contrast with other great kings of the Ikshvaku (or Ikshwaku) race who would observe such a life only in their ripe old age.

Verse no. 21:

प्रभावस्तम्भितच्छायमाश्रितः स वनस्पतिम्।

कदाचिदङ्के सीतायाः शिश्ये किञ्चिदिव श्रमात्॥ १२-२१

prabhāvastambhitacchāyamāśritaḥ sa vanaspatim|
kadācidanḱe sītāyāḥ śiśye kiñcidiva śramāt || 12-21

12-21. One day, Lord Ram was so tired that he lay down to rest under the shade of a tree, with his head on the lap of Sita for the sake of comfort. The Lord had cast his magical charm so that the shade was stable, for it did not fade with the passage of time and the movement of the sun in the sky.

[Note--Normally, as the sun moved in the sky from east to west, the shade of the tree would also change its location accordingly. But in this case, the shade remained static. From a practical angle, it means that the tree was so huge and its foliage so thick that the shade of the tree covered quite a large area below it. Hence, the movement of the sun had no practical impact on the area covered by the shade on the ground.]

Verse no. 22:

ऐन्द्रिः किल नखैस्तस्या विददार स्तनौ दिवजः।
प्रियोपभोगचिह्नेषु पौरोभाग्यमिवाचरन्॥ १२-२२

aindriḥ kila nakhaistasyā vidadāra stanau dvijaḥ|
priyopabhogacihneṣu paurobhāgyamivācaran || 12-22

12-22. It so happened that Jayant, the crooked son of Indra (the god of heaven), assumed the form of a crow and swooped down on the couple (Lord Ram and Sita), and deeply scratched (vidadāra) the two breasts of Sita (stanau dvijaḥ) with its claws (nakhaistasyā), whereby flesh was exposed and blood oozed out from the wound. Jayant wanted to give Lord Ram a bad name as those who were not privy to this incident would invariably think that in a moment of overriding passion, the Lord had made this wound by his own finger nails (to tease her when he was playing with her).

[Note--This incident is narrated by Tulsidas with a little variation in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 2. Tulsidas says that Jayant pricked Sita's feet, instead of her breasts. This Tulsidas did purposely to maintain decorum and dignity of his narration.

Later on, when Hanuman met Sita in Lanka, she told him about this event, asking him to repeat it before Lord Ram so that he is convinced that Hanuman has indeed met Sita, as no other person was aware of this incident except Sita and Lord Ram--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

Verse no. 23:

तस्मिन्नस्थदिषीकास्त्रम् रामो रामावबोधितः।
आत्मानम् मुमुचे तस्मादेकनेत्रव्ययेन सः॥ १२-२३

tasminnasthadiṣīkāstram rāmo rāmāvabodhitah|
ātmānam mumuce tasmādekanetravyayena saḥ || 12-23

12-23. Sita woke up Lord Ram immediately. The Lord picked up a twig lying nearby, and using it as an arrow he aimed at Jayant and shot it. Jayant panicked, and ran hither and thither in all the directions of the world, but saw the symbolic arrow of Lord Ram, that resemble a missile, pursuing him wherever he went.

But when he was exhausted, the Lord spared his life only after he took one eye of Jayant as punishment, thereby making the wicked crow one-eyed. {It is because Lord Ram's weapon can't go in vain.}

Verse no. 24:

रामस्त्वासन्नदेशत्वाद्भरतागमनम् पुनः।

आशङ्क्योत्सुकसारङ्गाम् चित्रकूटस्थलीम् जहौ॥ १२-२४

rāmastvāsannadeśatvādbharatāgamanam punaḥ|

āśaṅkyotsukasāraṅgām citrakūṭasthalīm jahau || 12-24

12-24. After spending some days at Chirakoot, Lord Ram left it and moved ahead into the deeper parts of the forest. It was because all the residents of nearby villages and hermitages had become so well aware of his presence that someone or the other kept paying a visit to the Lord. Besides this, the Lord feared that since his location was no longer a secret for the citizens of Ayodhya, there were probabilities of either Bharat himself or small and large groups from the city visiting him too often to meet him, something he wanted to avoid.

Lord Ram wanted to live anonymously, in peace and tranquillity. A virtual stream of visitors would rob the Lord of quietude which he longed for. So he thought it was wise to move to a new location.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 3.]

Verse no. 25:

प्रययावातिथेयेषु वसन्नृषिकुलेषु सः।

दक्षिणाम् दिशमृक्षेषु वार्षिकेष्विव भास्करः॥ १२-२५

prayayāvātithēyeṣu vasannṛṣikuleṣu saḥ|

dakṣiṇām diśamṛkṣeṣu vārṣikeṣviva bhāskaraḥ || 12-25

12-25. Just like the case of the sun passing through the ten asterisms (called Nakshatras) of the rainy season, starting with Ardra and ending with Swaati nakshatra (i.e. the onset of the rainy season and its end respectively), as it moves in the southern direction of the celestial globe (i.e. from the northern solstice to the southern solstice), so likewise Lord Ram left Chitrakoot and headed in the southern direction (i.e. in the direction where Lanka was located, and also the direction which would take the Lord further away from the inhabited parts of the forest where hermitages were located). On the way, Lord Ram paid visits to hermitages of great sages and ascetics to seek their blessings.

Verse no. 26:

बभौ तमनुगच्छन्ती विदेहाधिपतेः सुता।
प्रतिषिद्धापि कैकेय्या लक्ष्मीरिव गुणोन्मुखी॥ १२-२६

babhau tamanugacchantī videhādhipateḥ sutā|
pratiṣiddhāpi kaikeyyā lakṣmīriva guṇonmukhī || 12-26

12-26. Though the wickedness of Kaikeyi had prevented the deity of the kingdom, called 'Rajya Laxmi', to associate herself with Lord Ram, but Sita, who was a personified form of goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of wealth and prosperity, accompanied the Lord and followed him to the forest out of her reverence for the Lord's excellence of virtues and character.

[Note--Sita was Laxmi herself personified, while Rajya Laxmi is also another form of the goddess of wealth and prosperity as she represents the wealth of a prosperous kingdom like Ayodhya. Kaikeyi, by her wickedness, succeeded in barring Lord Ram from having access to the Rajya Laxmi of the kingdom of Ayodhya, but she couldn't prevent Lord Ram in having closeness with Sita who voluntarily followed the Lord to the forest.]

Verse no. 27:

अनसूयातिसृष्टेन पुण्यगन्धेन काननम्।
सा चकाराङ्गरागेण पुष्पोच्चलितषट्पदम्॥ १२-२७

anasūyātisṛṣṭeṇa puṇyagandhena kānanam|
sā cakārāṅgarāgeṇa puṣpoccalitaṣaṭpadam || 12-27

12-27. When Lord Ram moved ahead and reached the hermitage of sage Atri¹, then the sage's chaste wife named Anusuiya welcomed and honoured Sita by applying a fragrant ointment on her body which had such a sweet and pleasant scent that the bees of the forest who were hovering over fragrant flowers, eager to get an opportunity to drink nectar from them, got attracted by this scent, and leaving the flowers behind all of them came to hover over Sita.

[Note--Arrival of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in the hermitage of sage Atri, and Sita's meeting with Anusuiya has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha / Sortha no. 3; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 4 respectively.]

Verse no. 28:

संध्याभ्रकपिशस्तस्य विराधो नाम राक्षसः।
अतिष्ठन्मार्गमावृत्य रामस्येन्दोरिव ग्रहः॥ १२-२८

sam̐dhyābhrakapīśastasya virādhō nāma rākṣasaḥ |
atiṣṭhanmārgamāvṛtya rāmasyendoriva grahaḥ || 12-28

12-28. When Lord Ram left the sage's hermitage and moved ahead on the forest path, a fierce demon named Viradha¹, who was a monster as foreboding as the dark cloud of early evening (that blocks sunlight even before the sun actually sets), blocked the Lord's path in the same way as Rahu (a trunk-less demon with only a large gaping mouth) comes to block the path of the moon during the lunar eclipse².

[Note--¹This episode of Viradha blocking Lord Ram's path is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7. Viradha had a huge body; he menacingly blocked Lord Ram's way. Lord Ram slayed him.

²The story of Rahu blocking the path of the Moon is as follows: The legend has it that Rahu was the eldest son of the demon Viprachitti and his wife Shinghikaa. His younger brothers were Ilvala, Vaataapi, Narak amongst others. When Lord Vishnu, disguised as the beautiful Mohini, was distributing the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit to the Gods during the episode of the churning of the ocean as told in the Purans, Rahu assumed the form of a God and surreptitiously entered the lines of the Gods to take this Amrit. When his cheating was discovered, Vishnu cut-off his head with his weapon called the Chakra Sudarshan (a circular saw-like discus). But it so happened that before the head was severed Rahu had already drunk some Amrit, and so did not die. His head and torso became two independent entities. The former was called 'Rahu' and the latter 'Ketu'. The Ketu is seen as the comet that sometimes crosses the night sky.

Since the Moon God and the Sun God had betrayed him, Rahu takes revenge by devouring them periodically to satisfy his hunger. He devours them when they are in their full glory—viz. he devours the Moon God during the full moon night, and the Sun God only during the day time, either when the sun rises or during its journey across the sky, but never at sunset when the sun is already losing its radiance and is on the decline.

Again, since the head of Rahu was severed from the neck, hence both the Moon God and the Sun God re-emerge from the lower end of the head after they have been devoured by the mouth of Rahu. This is why the moon and the sun appear to be getting gradually cut-off from view from one end of their discs, symbolizing their gradually entering the mouth of Rahu as the latter begins to devour them. Then for some time they remain dark or obstructed from view symbolizing the period when they remain inside the mouth of Rahu. Finally, they gradually regain their original shape symbolizing their ejection from the lower end of Rahu's neck where it was severed from the trunk.

Thus we see that the mythological origin of the solar and lunar eclipse can be traced to this event of the churning of the ocean and the demon Rahu getting his head cut-off because he had cheated Vishnu in an attempt to drink Amrit. But having already drunk this elixir, he could not die; the head became Rahu and the trunk became Ketu (a comet). Because of this enmity, Rahu extracted a boon that he would eat the sun and the moon periodically when he felt hungry, which, according to mythology, he does during the solar and lunar eclipses respectively. The sun or the moon enter his mouth (the beginning of the eclipse), and emerge from his severed throat (marking the end of eclipse).

The story of Rahu and his head getting severed by Lord Vishnu's discus appears in Srimad Bhagwat MahaPuran, Chapter 8, Canto 9, especially verse nos. 24-26.

The story of why Rahu devours the sun and the moon periodically on different occasions has been narrated in Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 13, verse nos. 179-183. It was narrated to Lord Ram by sage Agastya when the Lord wanted to know about it. Briefly the story is as follows:

Lord Ram asked sage Agastya to tell him why Indra, the king of gods, had given the sun to Rahu to vent his ire upon. The sage replied: "The demon named Rahu had attained immortality by drinking Amrit, the ambrosia of immortality. This resulted in his occupying space that was reserved for senior gods in heaven. These gods are represented by the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus. Since Rahu was primarily evil by nature, he began to torment his neighbouring gods or planets. To get rid of this perpetual problem, the gods got together and told Rahu to vent his ire on the Sun and the Moon, and leave the rest of them alone. The gods thought that humans on earth would do religious deeds, make charities and perform penances during the time when Rahu attacks either of them, and the good effects of such deeds and charities and penances would be able to liberate the Sun and the Moon from the clutches of Rahu. This is why during the solar and the lunar eclipses people do all sorts of worship, make charities and sacrifices, and do other kinds of religious deeds. These activities please Rahu who satisfies himself by accepting such offerings; he withdraws himself, and leaves the Sun and the Moon alone. This devouring of the sun and the moon by Rahu causes the solar and the lunar eclipses respectively, and the good effects of various religious deeds done by humans during this period result in Rahu withdrawing from the scene, and sparing both the sun and the moon from further torments." (Verse nos. 179-183)

Actually however, as modern science has shown us, the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse is due to the earth's shadow falling on the moon's surface when it comes in the path of this shadow during its revolution around the earth. The solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the sun and the earth, thereby blocking the view of the sun from the surface of the earth. It is interesting to note that this scientific fact was known to the great Rishis (sages and seers) of ancient times, to those who had preached the Upanishads, and it is clearly mentioned in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says "When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon's curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event, and the darkness on the moon's disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments."

Similarly, the solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the shiny surface of the sun and the view from earth, thereby blocking the former's view from the latter's surface.

The elongated torso of Rahu came to known as 'Ketu' and it is recognized as the comet in modern science. That is why sighting of the comet is regarded as a bad omen.

Both Rahu and Ketu are placed amongst the nine planets. They represent the two nodal points where the celestial equator cuts the ecliptic.

In iconography, Rahu is depicted as just a head or even as a snake's hood.

In Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas' we find that a reference is given to this mythological phenomenon in its Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12. When Lord Ram asks his companions what they think of the dark spots on the moon, one of them said that they are caused by the wound inflicted upon the moon by Rahu.]

Verse no. 29:

स जहार तयोर्मध्ये मैथिलीम् लोकशोषणः।

नभोनभस्ययोर्वृष्टिमवग्रह इवान्तरे॥ १२-२९

sa jahāra tayormadhye maithilīm lokaśoṣaṇaḥ|
nabhonabhasyayorvr̥ṣṭimavagraha ivāntare || 12-29

12-29. Just as some misfortune or malignant star snatches rainfall from the earth during the two rainy seasons of Srawan (mid July to mid August) and Bhadon (mid August to mid September), causing drought and making the people suffer due to an absence of rain, likewise the monster Viradha snatched Sita, who was walking between Lord Ram and Laxman, away from them.

[Note--Srawan is the fifth month of the Hindu calendar, and Bhandon the sixth month. During these two months that correspond respectively from mid July to mid August, and from mid August to mid September, there is normally heavy rainfall. But it may happen that due to some misfortune, there is no rain and drought sets in. The earth becomes parched and the people are subjected to a lot of suffering due to the failure of rain. Crops wither, the heat of the preceding summer further scorches the earth, and water sources such as rivers, ponds and lakes dry up or their water level drops to an alarming level.

Likewise, when Viradha snatched Sita as she walked between Lord Ram and Laxman, it made the two brothers excessively anxious and peeved.]

Verse no. 30:

तम् विनिष्पिष्य काकुत्स्थौ पुरा दूषयति स्थलीम्।

गन्धेनाशुचिना चेति वसुधायाम् निचख्नतुः॥ १२-३०

tam viniṣpiṣya kākutsthau purā dūṣayati sthalīm|
gandhenāśucinā ceti vasudhāyām nicakhnatuḥ || 12-30

12-30. Lord Ram and Laxman, the two great descendants of Kukustha race (kākutsthau), immediately slayed Viratha and buried his dead body in a deep pit in the ground to prevent foul smell from spoiling the environment and contaminating the surrounding area.

Verse no. 31:

पञ्चवत्याम् ततो रामः शासनात्कुम्भजन्मनः।

अनपोढस्थितिस्तस्थौ विन्ध्याद्रिः प्रकृताविव॥ १२-३१

pañcavaṭyām tato rāmaḥ śāsanātkumbhajanmanah|
anapoḍhasthitistasthau vindhyādrīḥ prakṛtāviva || 12-31

12-31. Just as Mt. Vindhya had become stable on the instructions of the great sage Agastya¹, so did Lord Ram stayed at Panchavati forest while observing self-control and austerities on the instructions of the sage (whom the Lord met on the way)².

[Note--¹The story related to Mt. Vindhya and sage Agastya is briefly as follows: The story of sage Agastya stopping Mt. Vindychal from rising too high in the sky is narrated in the Mahabharat, Vanaparva, Chapter 104.

The Sun-God, who goes around Mt. Sumeru, the golden mountain, daily, was once asked by the patron deity of Mt. Vindychal to go around this mountain as well. The Sun-God, however, declined, saying that his course or path through the heavens (sky) has been determined by the Creator, and hence he has no authority to violate it by going around some other mountain. This annoyed the deity of Mt. Vindychal who decided to raise the mountain to such an height that it would stand in the way of the Sun-God's course through the firmament, thereby obstructing his path and preventing him from circling Mt. Sumeru.

The gods residing on Mt. Sumeru were alarmed and flummoxed at this sudden and extraordinary development. They approached the mighty sage Agastya and sought his help to restrain Mt. Vindychal from getting higher and obstructing the path of the Sun. The sage devised a stratagem and went to the Mt. Vindychal, and asked its deity to give him way so that he can move on towards the south direction from the northern plains. The deity representing Mt. Vindychal prostrated before the revered sage to pay respects to him, and allowed him to cross over its body (i.e. the mountain) to the other side. The sage went to the other side but asked the deity keep the mountain thus prostrated (i.e. lie low) till the time the sage came back from his mission. The deity had to obey the sage. However, the sage never returned that way, and hence Mt. Vindychal kept on lying low ever since that time. In this way, the wise sage had successfully prevented Mt. Vindychal from rising heavenwards and obstructing the path of the Sun.

²Sage Agastya: Sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a 'Brahm-rishi' or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as 'Kumbha'. Hence, he is also known as

Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vasistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

According to the story of Ramayana, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had visited the sage when they had gone to the forest. The sage lived in the most formidable and inhospitable part of the southern forests, beyond the Vindya range of mountains, that was known as Dandak, or Dandakaranya. One of his disciples was sage Sutikshan whom Lord Ram had blessed prior to going to meet sage Agastya. It was sage Agastya who had advised Lord Ram to go and dwell for some time at Panchavti.

This episode of Lord Ram meeting sage Agastya is narrated in (a) Tulsidas' version of the Ramayana that is known as 'Ram Charit Manas', in its Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 13; and (b) Veda Vyas' version known as the "Adhyatma Ramayan", in its Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-50.]

Verse no. 32:

रावणावरजा तत्र राघवम् मदनातुरा।

अभिपेदे निदाघार्ता व्यालीव मलयद्रुमम्॥ १२-३२

rāvaṇāvarajā tatra rāghavam madanāturā |
abhipeḍe nidāghartā vyālīva malayadrūmam || 12-32

12-32. At Panchavati, the younger sister of Ravana named Supernakha became so enchanted by Lord Ram's beautiful form that passion overcame her and she came to the Lord (with an intention of establishing a relationship with him)¹, just like the case of a female serpent comes to find comfort under the cool shade of the sandalwood tree when she is tormented by the heat of the sun in her hole in the ground.

[Note--¹This episode of Supernakha coming to Lord Ram disguised as a damsel, with passion burning her blood with desire, asking the Lord to have a conjugal relationship with her is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 17.

Her name Supernakha was because she had broad fan-like nails--refer: verse no. 38 herein below.]

Verse no. 33:

सा सीतासंनिधावेव तम् वव्रे कथितान्वया।

अत्यारूढो हि नारीणामकालज्ञो मनोभवः॥ १२-३३

sā sītāsaṁnidhāveva tam vavre kathitānvayā |
atyārūḍho hi nārīṇāmakālañño manobhavaḥ || 12-33

12-33. When Supernakha met Lord Ram, first she introduced herself and informed the Lord about her lineage. After that, throwing all caution to the wind, she told the Lord that she wants to marry him, that also in front of Sita.

Verily indeed, it is true that when a promiscuous woman of low virtue is overcome by passion, she does not pay attention to what she is doing and saying or what situation she is in.

[Note--Supernakha broke all limits of good behaviour, etiquette and decency by asking Lord Ram to marry her while Sita was close by. It was really a funny and embarrassing situation to ask a married man to accept a proposal of conjugal relationship with another unknown woman in front of his wife. But Supernakha, being a demoness, was not accustomed to observing niceties of social behaviour.]

Verse no. 34:

कलत्रवानहम् बाले कनीयांसम् भजस्व मे।

इति रामो वृषस्यन्तीम् वृषस्कन्धः शशास ताम्॥ १२-३४

kalatravānaḥam bāle kaṇīyāṁsam bhajasva me |
iti rāmo vṛṣasyantīm vṛṣaskandhaḥ śaśāsa tām || 12-34

12-34. When Lord Ram, who had broad and muscular shoulders like that of a healthy bull, heard this incredulous proposition of Supernakha, he was taken aback.

Then, recovering quickly from his shock, the Lord said to Supernakha: "Oh damsel! I am a married man (so I cannot accept your proposal). But you can approach my younger brother (Laxman)"¹.

[Note--In the forest, Laxman always maintained a respectable distance and never disturbed Lord Ram and Sita. He gave them enough space for privacy by staying at a short distance away from them, close enough to come quickly when needed, but distant enough to give the Lord and Sita space for privacy. If the hermitage had only one room, then Laxman would sit outside the door. If it had two chambers, then Laxman lived in the other chamber.

In any case, when Supernakha came to visit Lord Ram, it is obvious that Laxman too must have been present there, as without his permission no outsider could enter the hermitage where they lived. When Laxman heard what Supernakha said, and Lord Ram's

answer to her, he got a hint at what the Lord wanted. So he became alert and waited for an instruction from the Lord to take the next step. It was by now clear to him that this unknown lady was a wicked woman, as no lady in her senses would make such a nonsensical proposal to a man while his wife was present on the occasion.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-16 that precede Doha no. 17.]

Verse no. 35:

**ज्येष्ठाभिगमनात्पूर्वम् तेनाप्यनभिनन्दिताम्।
साऽभूद्रामाश्रया भूयो नदीवोभयकूलभाक्॥ १२-३५**

jyeṣṭhābhigamanātpūrvam tenāpyanabhinanditām|
sā'bhūdrāmāśrayā bhūyo nadīvobhayakūlabhāk || 12-35

12-35. Supernakha immediately approached Laxman who told her that since she had already approached his elder brother Lord Ram with a proposal of marriage, so she is like a mother for him. Hence, it is not feasible for him to accept her proposal to marry her. Thus rebuked by Laxman, she once again went to Lord Ram¹.

At that time, her condition was like a river which flows with its currents tossing and turning between its two banks, touching both but not staying for any length of time with either as the river moves ahead on its course².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-17 that precede Doha no. 17.

²A river touches both its banks with its currents oscillating between the two as the river flows onwards. But while the current of the river is not static but always on the move, the banks remain steady and unmoving. So likewise, the fickle minded Supernakha was not sure whom to marry, for first she approached Lord Ram and then suddenly went to Laxman with the same proposal just like the current of a river oscillating from one bank to the other. She appeared like the river tossing and turning between its two banks because she went back and forth between Lord Ram and Laxman.]

Verse no. 36:

**संरम्भम् मैथिलीहासः क्षणसौम्याम् निनाय ताम्।
निवातस्तिमिताम् वेलाम् चन्द्रोदय इवोदधेः॥ १२-३६**

saṁrambham maithilīhāsaḥ kṣaṇasaumyām nināya tām|
nivātaṣṭimitām velām candrodaya ivodadheḥ || 12-36

12-36. When Supernakha observed that during the preceding discourse, Sita laughed (maithilīhāsaḥ) (as if all this thing was a joke), she lost her composure and became furious as she reverted back to her original form of a fearful and ugly demoness (because she took Sita's behaviour as an umbrage and an insult to her self-respect), just like case of an ocean whose waters had hitherto remained calm when there was no disturbance from wind, suddenly becomes agitated and starts heaving when the full moon rises in the sky.

[Note--Although Lord Ram and Laxman had spurned Supernakha's overtures, but they stayed cool during their interaction with her. So Supernakha too remained calm just like the surface of the ocean remaining calm when there is no wind. But Sita's laughing at her was the fuse that ignited her anger. Here, Sita's charming and radiant face is compared to the full moon, and just as the appearance of the moon makes the ocean agitated, so did Sita's calm and nonchalant attitude infuriated Supernakha. She took Sita's behaviour as a slight on her dignity. This anger of Supernakha is also because of jealousy with Sita as she felt that the latter was the reason why Lord Ram did not accept her proposal of marriage. Sita's smiles and laughs added fuel to fire, leading to Supernakha losing her cool and reverting back to her furious form of a demoness. It must be remembered that she was not an ordinary demoness, but the sister of the king of demons, i.e. Ravana. This relationship with the demon king had made Supernakha haughty and arrogant by nature, and therefore she was very furious as she was accustomed to having her own way, and did not expect anyone to dare to oppose or rebuke her.]

Verse no. 37:

फलमस्योपहासस्य सद्यः प्राप्स्यसि पश्य माम्।

मृग्याः परिभवो व्याघ्र्यामित्यवेहि त्वया कृतम्॥ १२-३७

phalamasyopahāsasya sadyaḥ prāpsyasi paśya mām|
mṛgyāḥ paribhavo vyāghryāmitryavehi tvayā kṛtam || 12-37

12-37. Supernakha roared at Sita with a venom in her voice: "Look, you will soon get the fruit of taunting me with a scornful smile. What you have done is like a doe insulting a tigress. {Just like the result of a doe insulting a tigress is never good for the doe, so likewise your insulting me is not going to be good for you too.}"

Verse no. 38:

इत्युक्त्वा मैथिलीम् भर्तुरङ्के निविशतीम् भयात्।

रूपम् शूर्पणखा नाम्नः सदृशम् प्रत्यपद्यत॥ १२-३८

ityuktvā maithilīm bharturaṅke nivīśatīm bhayāt|
rūpam śūrpaṇakhā nāmnaḥ sadṛśam pratyapadyata || 12-38

12-38. Glaring menacingly at Sita, who was terrified and cowering for cover by the side of Lord Ram, the demoness Supernakha abandoned her assumed charming form of a young woman (with which she had tried to lure Lord Ram) and reverted back to her original form that was befitting her name, i.e. a horrible-looking demoness with large fan-like nails.

Verse no. 39:

**लक्ष्मणः प्रथमम् श्रुत्वा कोकिलामञ्जुवादिनीम्।
शिवाघोरस्वनाम् पश्चाद्बुबुधे विकृतेति ताम्॥ १२-३९**

lakṣmaṇaḥ prathamam śrutvā kokilāmañjuvādinīm|
śivāghorasvanām paścādbubudhe vikṛteti tām || 12-39

12-39. When Laxman observed that while a few moments ago she was speaking sweetly like a cuckoo and all of a sudden she was howling like a female jackal, he realised that this lady is a fierce demoness (who is accustomed to changing her form and attitude like a chameleon).

{Laxman immediately understood that the lady who seemed so alluring and sweet a while ago is not what she pretended to be, but a violent demoness in reality.}

Verse no. 40:

**पर्णशालामथ क्षिप्रम् विकृष्टासिः प्रविश्य सः।
वैरूप्यपौनरुक्त्येन भीषणाम् तामयोजयत्॥ १२-४०**

parṇaśālāmatha kṣipram vikṛṣṭāsiḥ praviśya saḥ|
vairūpyapaunaruktyena bhīṣaṇām tāmayojayat || 12-40

12-40. So therefore, Laxman immediately drew his sword, entered the hermitage, and sliced-off the nose and ears of the hideous-looking demoness (Supernakha).

Verse no. 41:

**सा वक्रनखधारिण्या वेणुकर्कशपर्वया।
अङ्कुशाकारयाङ्गुल्या तावतर्जयदम्बरे॥ १२-४१**

sā vakranakhadhāriṇyā veṇukarkaśaparvayā|
aṅkuśākārayāṅgulyā tāvatarjayadambare || 12-41

12-41. Deformed and made more hideous by having her nose and ears chopped-off, Supernakha ran upwards into the sky, hovering overhead and threatening the two brothers

(Lord Ram and Laxman) with her bent fingers that had sharp and craggy nails, and hands that were as stiff as bamboo, giving an overall impression of an elephant's goad.

[Note--The goad has a long and sturdy handle, made usually of hard bamboo, with a pointed tip made of iron. Some versions of the goad, especially used to tame wild elephants, have an iron piece slightly curved inwards and having a pointed tip. Both types are used to control an elephant. The one with a straight handle and a pointed tip is used to pierce the animal's head or temple to control it, while the other type is used to prick the elephant on the side.

So, just like the elephant tamer threatens the animal by showing it the goad as the animal knows that if it does not obey, it would get pricked by the goad, so likewise Supernakha waved her hands menacingly at Lord Ram and Laxman, threatening them with dire consequences, and warning them of retribution for having deformed her.]

Verse no. 42:

**प्राप्य चाशु जनस्थानम् खरादिभ्यस्तथाविधम्।
रामोपक्रममाचख्यौ रक्षःपरिभवम् नवम्॥ १२-४२**

prāpya cāśu janasthānam kharādibhyastathāvidham|
rāmopakramamācakhyaau rakṣaḥparibhavam navam || 12-42

12-42. Supernakha straightaway went to her place of residence in the depths of the forest, and without loss of time she narrated to the demon Khar and others how Lord Ram and Laxman had insulted her, and added salt over her wounds by deforming her. She instigated them to take revenge by saying that it was the first time that someone has dared to challenge the might of the demons, and a quick response was the need of the moment (for otherwise, the honour and dignity of the demons would be compromised for all times to come, and these two humans would become bolder, thereby endangering the rest of the demon race).

Verse no. 43:

**मुखावयवलूनाम् ताम् नैरृता यत्पुरो दधुः।
रामाभियायिनाम् तेषाम् तदेवाभूदमङ्गलम्॥ १२-४३**

mukhāvayavalūnām tām nairṛtā yatpuro dadhuḥ|
rāmābhiyāyinām teṣām tadevābhūdamaṅgalam || 12-43

12-43. Putting the mutilated Supernakha, whose nose and ears had been cut-off, in the front to serve as a guide to lead the demon army headed by Khar to the hermitage of Lord Ram, the demons had already invoked a bad omen for themselves, because when one goes out on some mission of importance, then at that time having a deformed person in

the front, or even the sight of such a person, is regarded as an inauspicious sign that portends failure and setback.

{To wit, unknowingly and unwittingly, the demons dug their own graves by making a deformed Supernakha lead them to Lord Ram's hermitage. It was like voluntarily inviting death and catastrophe upon themselves.}

Verse no. 44:

उदायुधानात्पततस्तान्दृप्तान्प्रेक्ष्य राघवः।

निदधे विजयाशंसाम् चापे सीताम् च लक्ष्मणे॥ १२-४४

udāyudhānātpatatastāndrptānprekṣya rāghavaḥ|
nidadhe vijayāśaṁsām cāpe sītām ca lakṣmaṇe || 12-44

12-44. When Lord Ram beheld the army of demons rushing towards his hermitage with weapons ready for attack, the Lord quickly weighed all the possibilities and concluded that he himself was competent to tackle this menace, and did not need help from Laxman.

So therefore, he entrusted the safety of Sita in Laxman's hands, and himself came out of the hermitage to face the attacking demon army.

Verse no. 45:

एको दाशरथिः कामम् यातुधानाः सहस्रशः।

ते तु यावन्त एवाजौ तावांश्च ददृशे स तैः॥ १२-४५

eko dāśarathiḥ kāmam yātudhānāḥ sahasraśaḥ|
te tu yāvanta evājau tāvāṁśca dadṛśe sa taiḥ || 12-45

12-45. Though Lord Ram was single and there were thousands of demon warriors, yet the way the Lord fought with extreme agility, quickly changing positions, that it created an impression for the demon army that many Ram's were on the ground fighting together, simultaneously, leading the attackers to become so confused that all their attempts to strike the Lord precisely were proving futile, and their attacks missed their target.

[Note--One moment Lord Ram was here, and the next moment he moved to another point on the ground. He did it so rapidly that it created an illusion of so many figures of the Lord standing side-by-side on the ground. When the demon soldiers threw one weapon, the Lord moved swiftly to another location so that the weapon missed its target.]

Verse no. 46:

असज्जनेन काकुत्स्थः प्रयुक्तमथ दूषणम्।

न चक्षमे शुभाचारः स दूषणमिवात्मनः॥ १२-४६

asajjanena kākutsthaḥ prayuktamatha dūṣaṇam|
na cakṣame śubhācāraḥ sa dūṣaṇamivātmanaḥ || 12-46

12-46. Just like an upright man, who conducts himself properly in accordance with the principles of probity and propriety, is unable to tolerate false accusations levelled against him by unscrupulous people of low moral, so likewise Lord Ram, who was always noble and untainted, could not come to terms with the wild and evil demon Dushan (brother of Khar) coming to attack him (by taking sides with Supernakha, though it was her own wickedness that had forced Lord Ram to deform her to teach her a lesson so that she does not repeat her mischief again).

[Note--Yielding to a bully only emboldens him. Lord Ram decided that if he spared the attackers who were prodded by Supernakha, then the consequences would be that they would always torment him during his long stay in the forest. So it was better to get rid of the nuisance right now.]

Verse no. 47:

तम् शरैः प्रतिजग्राह खरत्रिशिरसौ च सः।
क्रमशस्ते पुनस्तस्य चापात्सममिवोद्ययुः॥ १२-४७

tam śaraiḥ pratijagrāha kharatrisīrasau ca saḥ|
kramaśaste punastasya cāpātsamamivodyayuh || 12-47

12-47. Ram shot three arrows at Dushan, Khar and Trishira, one arrow aimed at each demon. The arrows were shot in such quick succession that they appeared to leave the Lord's bow simultaneously.

[Note--Lord Ram was a skilled archer. So he mounted three arrows on his bow and shot them in one go, just like a modern missile launching platform which has the ability to shoot multiple projectiles simultaneously. The string was pulled and released only once, and all the three arrows lunged forward all at once.]

Verse no. 47:

तैस्त्रयाणाम् शितैर्बाणैर्यथापूर्वविशुद्धिभिः।
आयुर्देहातिगैः पीतम् रुधिरम् तु पतत्रिभिः॥ १२-४८

taistrayaṇām śitairbāṇairyathāpūrvaviśuddhibhiḥ|
āyurdehātigaiḥ pītam rudhiram tu patatribhiḥ || 12-48

12-48. Those arrows entered and exited the bodies of the three demons so quickly that blood did not have time to coagulate and stick to them. The Lord's arrows were not thirsty for blood; they were not meant to drink the blood of the demons, but only end

their lives, for the blood was meant to quench the thirst of birds of prey (such as vultures, who descended in droves and sucked every single drop of it).

[Note--The arrows had stupendous speed; they entered and left the body in a fraction of a millisecond. As they exited from the body through a minute hole made on the skin at the rear end of the body, whatever blood that stuck to them was wiped clean by the pressure of the surrounding skin-tissue just like one cleans the handle of a table spoon by pressing a wiping cloth against it as the spoon is drawn outwards.

A hole was punctured on the body as soon as the arrows exited, and blood formed a thick clot around it. Then birds of prey descended and poked through these punctures, and drank blood to their heart's content.]

Verse no. 49:

तस्मिन्नामशरोत्कृत्ते बले महति रक्षसाम्।
उत्थितम् ददृशेऽन्न्यच्च कबन्धेभ्यो न किञ्चन॥ १२-४९

tasminrāmaśarotkr̥tte bale mahati rakṣasām|
utthitam dadṛśe'nnyacca kabandhebhyo na kiñcana || 12-49

12-49. Lord Ram decimated that large army of demons by slaying them quickly in such a way that after a short while the whole ground was covered by their headless trunks.

[Note--Lord Ram had sliced-off the heads of the demons. These heads were flung far and wide like a shower of countless meteors streaming across the sky, while the headless trunks tottered for a while before collapsing on the ground.]

Verse no. 50:

सा बाणवर्षिणम् रामम् योधयित्वा सुरदिवषाम्।
अप्रबोधाय सुष्वाप गृध्रच्छाये वरूथिनी॥ १२-५०

sā bāṇavarṣiṇam rāmam yodhayitvā suradviṣām|
aprabodhāya suṣvāpa gr̥dhraścchāye varūthinī || 12-50

12-50. By the shower of Lord Ram's invincible arrows, the army of demons who had terrified the gods was made to sleep eternally under the shadow of wings of vultures (who descended in hordes to feast on the corpses).

[Note--Just like a dead person is laid to rest under some kind of shade, the dead demons were shaded by the wings of vultures who swooped down upon them from the sky.]

Verse no. 51:

राघवास्त्रविदीर्णानाम् रावणम् प्रति रक्षसाम्।
तेषाम् शूर्पणखैवैका दुष्प्रवृत्तिहराऽभवत्॥ १२-५१

rāghavāstravidīrṇānām rāvaṇam prati rakṣasām|
teṣām śūrpaṇakhaivaikā duṣpravṛttiharā'bhavat || 12-51

12-51. Only Supernakha was left behind to convey to Ravana, the king of the demon race, the news of the death of these demons by the arrows of Lord Ram (because all the others were dead).

Verse no. 52:

निग्रहात्स्वसुराप्तानाम् वधाच्च धनदानुजः।
रामेण निहितम् मेने पदम् दशसु मूर्धसु॥ १२-५२

nigrahātsvasurāptānām vadhācca dhanadānujaḥ|
rāmeṇa nihitam mene padam daśasu mūrdhasu || 12-52

12-52. When Ravana heard of the insult inflicted upon his sister Supernakha and the slaying of his trusted lieutenants and kinsmen (Khar, Dushan and Trishira), he felt extremely annoyed and agitated as if Lord Ram had symbolically put his foot on his ten heads to humiliate him and trample upon his honour.

[Note--Ravana treated this development as a direct challenge to his authority and power. He was not accustomed to such a thing, so this news infuriated him and rubbed his ego and pride the wrong way.]

Verse no. 53:

रक्षसा मृगरूपेण वञ्चयित्वा स राघवौ।
जहार सीताम् पक्षीन्द्रप्रयासक्षणविघ्नितः॥ १२-५३

rakṣasā mṛgarūpeṇa vañcayitvā sa rāghavau|
jahāra sītām pakṣīन्द्रprayaśakṣaṇavighnitaḥ || 12-53

12-53. Deciding to take revenge, Ravana compelled the demon Marich to assume the form of a golden deer (i.e. a deer with a golden skin). Using this as a bait, he deceived the two brothers of the lineage of ancient king Raghu (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) to steal Sita and take her away (to his capital at Lanka)¹. On the way, he was intercepted by the vulture king named Jatayu who tried to save Sita and had briefly fought with Ravana for this purpose, but the poor bird did not succeed (because the demon cut-off his wings, felling him on the ground)².

[Note--¹This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23-to Doha no. 28.

²This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-22 that precede Doha no. 229.]

Verse no. 54:

तौ सीतावेषिणौ गृध्रम् लूनपक्षमपश्यताम्।
प्राणैर्दशरथप्रीतेरनुणम् कण्ठवर्तिभिः॥ १२-५४

tau sītāveṣiṇau gr̥dhram lūnapakṣamapaśyatām|
prāṇairdaśarathapṛīteranuṇam kaṇṭhavartibhiḥ || 12-54

12-54. When Lord Ram and Laxman began their search for Sita and moved around in the forest, they came to a place where they saw the old vulture Jatau lying wounded on the ground. His wings had been cut-off and his last breath was stuck in his throat.

Lord Ram recognised him to be a friend of his father king Dasrath. By dying in his attempt to save Sita from being abducted by Ravana, Jatau had discharged the debt of friendship to his friend Dasrath¹.

[Note--¹ Let us briefly read the few stories that are associated with the friendship between king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, and Jatau, the vulture.

One such is narrated in Aagneya Ramayana. It says that at the time of Dasrath's marriage with his eldest wife Kaushalya, Ravana, the king of demons, got the wind of it and became irked. He created obstacles in the path of the groom's party while it was on its way from Ayodhya to the kingdom where Kaushalya lived. Ravana caused a flood to occur in the river that the groom's party was crossing on boats. The particular boat that Dasrath rode broke, and he was left adrift on the water. But somehow he managed to save his life by reaching an island. Sage Vasistha too was with king Dasrath at this time. The auspicious time fixed for the marriage ceremony was very near, and the two, Dasrath and Vasistha, marooned in a remote island, were worried as to how they would reach the venue in time. It was on this occasion that Jatau had helped them by giving them a lift on his back and ferried them to their destination. This is believed to be the reason why Dasrath and Jatau became life-long friends.

In another Ramayana known as the 'Bhavartha Ramayana', there is a story that king Dasrath had gone to help Indra, the king of gods, to fight a demon named Namuchi. During the fierce battle, Jatau had attacked Namuchi and felled the armour that the demon wore on his head as a protective shield. Seizing the moment, Dasrath had severed the demon's head. Since that time, the two, Jatau and Dasrath, became fast friends and comrade-in-arms.

Another reason for their brotherhood was that sage Kashyap was the grandfather of Jatau, the king of vultures, and king Manu, who later on took birth as king Dasrath—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123.

Jatau and Dasrath were contemporaries, and both lived for 60 thousand years—
apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse no. 20.]

Verse no. 55:

स रावणहृताम् ताभ्याम् वचसाचष्ट मैथिलीम्।

आत्मनः सुमहत्कर्म व्रणैरावेद्य संस्थितः॥ १२-५५

sa rāvaṇahṛtām tābhyām vacasācaṣṭa maithilīm|
ātmanah sumahatkarma vraṇairāvedya saṁsthitaḥ || 12-55

12-55. Jatau informed Lord Ram and Laxman that Sita had been abducted by Ravana¹. A glance at his wounds showed the two brothers how valiantly he had fought with Ravana in order to save Sita. But soon the bird died (and went to heaven).

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 31.]

Verse no. 56:

तयोस्तस्मिन्नवीभूतपितृव्यापतिशोकयोः।

पितरीवाग्निसंस्कारात्परा ववृतिरे क्रियाः॥ १२-५६

tayostasminnavībhūtapitr̥vyāpatishokayoh|
pitarīvāgnisaṁskārātparā vavṛtire kriyāḥ || 12-56

12-56. Jatau could speak no more, and died soon thereafter (but not before informing the two brothers about Ravana abducting Sita and taking her in the southern direction¹).

Jatau's death made Lord Ram and Laxman as sad and dismayed as they had been when they learnt of the death of their father, king Dasrath. The grieving brothers performed all the funeral rites and cremated Jatau with all respect as if they were conducting the funeral and cremation rituals of their own father².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32.]

Verse no. 57:

वधनिर्धूतशापस्य कबन्धस्योपदेशतः।

मुमूर्च्छं सख्यम् रामस्य समानव्यसने हरौ॥ १२-५७

vadhanirdhūtaśāpasya kabandhasyopadeśataḥ|
mumūrccha sakhyam rāmasya samānavyasane harau || 12-57

12-57. Proceeding ahead from that place, Lord Ram and Laxman encountered a demon named Kabandha. He had become a demon due to a sage's curse. Lord Ram cut-off his limbs, thereby freeing him from the curse. Kabandha then reverted to his earlier form which resembled a demi-god¹.

Kabandha was mighty pleased to have found liberation from the curse, and so in order to express his thanks and gratitude to Lord Ram, he told the Lord about Sugriv and how he lives in exile because his elder brother Baali had snatched his wife as well as his share of the kingdom of Kishkindha.

Lord Ram, who himself was suffering a similar trauma of having his wife Sita being forcibly taken away from him, instantly developed sympathy for Sugriv and empathised with his condition as the Lord found a common ground of grievance between his own condition and that of Sugriv (as both had their wives forcibly snatched from them).

Therefore, Lord Ram established friendship with Sugriv and developed a rapport with him².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 33. It was sage Durbasa who had cursed him.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 1, and Doha no. 4.

Sugriv had promised Lord Ram that he would do whatever can to find and retrieve Sita (refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 5), and the Lord reciprocated by promising his friend Sugriv that he would restore the latter's honour by eliminating his arch rival Baali (refer: Doha no. 6 along with Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that follow it).]

Verse no. 58:

स हत्वा वालिनम् वीरस्तत्पदे चिरकाङ्क्षिते।
धातोः स्थान इवादेशम् सुग्रीवम् संन्यवेशयत्॥ १२-५८

sa hatvā vālinam vīrastatpade cirakāṅkṣite|
dhātoḥ sthāna ivādeśam sugrīvam saṁnyaveśayat || 12-58

12-58. The warrior Lord Ram killed Baali and restored the hereditary right to the throne of the kingdom (of Kishkindha) to Sugriv, thereby setting right a grave mistake that Baali had made (by disinheriting his brother from his right to the share of the kingdom). It was like the case of a linguistic expert setting right an error of grammar or word composition by inserting a replacement in the form of a syllable, letter or word as a substitute to rectify that error, without changing the overall meaning.

Verse no. 59:

**इतस्ततश्च वैदेहीमन्वेष्टुम् भर्तृचोदिताः।
कपयश्चेरुरार्तस्य रामस्येव मनोरथाः॥ १२-५९**

itastataśca vaidehīmanveṣṭum bhartṛcoditāḥ|
kapayaścerurārtasya rāmasyeva manorathāḥ || 12-59

12-59. Upon receiving instructions from Sugriv, large number of monkey and bears went in all the directions in search of Sita¹ just like Lord Ram had himself wandered in the forest to search for her earlier, and his mind still wandered here and there contemplating on the many possibilities of her being present somewhere.

[Note--¹To fulfil his promise to Lord Ram that he will do his best to find Sita and restore her to the Lord, Sugriv, now with the resources of the kingdom at his disposal, sent messengers in all the directions to find the whereabouts of Sita. His messengers spread in all the directions, looking into every nook and corner of the country to get a hint of her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 22.]

Verse no. 60:

**प्रवृत्तावुपलब्धायाम् तस्याः संपातिदर्शनात्।
मारुतिः सागरम् तीर्णः संसारमिव निर्ममः॥ १२-६०**

pravṛttāvupalabdhāyām tasyāḥ sampātidarśanāt|
mārutiḥ sāgaram tīrṇaḥ saṁsāramiva nirmamaḥ || 12-60

12-60. While undertaking this massive exercise, one group met Sampati, the brother of the vulture Jatau. Sampati told the group that it was the demon king Ravana who has taken Sita away and he has held her captive in his capital of Lanka on the other shore of the ocean. When the monkeys and bears heard this, they unanimously decided to send Hanuman on the mission to meet Sita and come back with her news¹. Then, Hanuman leapt across the width of the ocean² in the same way as a person who has renounced the charm of the material world and has developed detachment from it is able to easily cross over the symbolic ocean of transmigration, representing the endless cycle of birth and death, to find salvation, emancipation, deliverance, eternal rest and peace for his soul (which is called 'Moksha').

[Note--¹This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, from Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27-to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.

²Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.

A very significant observation can be made here. Hanuman faced many hurdles while crossing the ocean to Lanka, but he overcame them easily. Similarly, a man may face many obstacles in his pursuit of Moksha and spiritual bliss, but if he remains steady and has truly developed renunciation, dispassion and detachment then no charm, no allurements of the material world would be strong enough to be able to trap him in its tentacles. Hanuman was devoted to accomplish his task of finding Sita, and everything else simply mattered nothing to him.]

Verse no. 61:

**दृष्टा विचिन्वता तेन लङ्कायाम् राक्षसीवृता।
जानकी विषवल्लीभिः परितेव महौषधिः॥ १२-६१**

dr̥ṣṭā vicinvatā tena laṅkāyām rākṣasīvṛtā |
jānakī viṣavallībhiḥ pariteva mahauṣadhiḥ || 12-61

12-61. While searching for Sita in Lanka, Hanuman saw her sitting silently at a place. She was surrounded on all the sides by fearful-looking female demons, yet her inherent aura of glory, holiness and piety weren't diminished, but shone through. The sight reminded one of a powerful herb known as 'Sanjivani' whose life-restoring and rejuvenating qualities remain unaffected even if it is surrounded by poisonous creepers.

[Note--Here, Sita is likened to the Sanjivani, while the demoness to the poisonous creepers.]

Verse no. 62:

**तस्यै भर्तुरभिज्ञानमङ्गुलीयम् ददौ कपिः।
प्रत्युदगतमिवानुष्णैस्तदानन्दाश्रुबिन्दुभिः॥ १२-६२**

tasyai bharturabhijñānamāṅgulīyam dadau kapiḥ |
pratyudgatamivānuṣṇaistadānandāśrubindubhiḥ || 12-62

12-62. Hanuman went to her and gave her the finger-ring that Lord Ram had given to Hanuman earlier as a token of identification¹. Sita received it with tears of joy in her eyes that seemed cool to symbolise her great relief.

[Note--¹At the time of departure from Kishkindha, Lord Ram summoned Hanuman and gave him his finger-ring to be carried to Sita as a token to identify himself. This ring convinced Sita that Hanuman was indeed a messenger from the Lord, and not some cunning demon out to deceive her at the behest of Ravana.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23; and (b) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 12-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 14.]

Verse no. 63:

निर्वाप्य प्रियसंदेशैः सीतामक्षवधोद्धतः।

स ददाह पुरीम् लङ्काम् क्षणसोढारिनिग्रहः॥ १२-६३

nirvāpya priyasamdeśaiḥ sītāmakṣavadhoddhataḥ |
sa dadāha purīm laṅkāṁ kṣaṇasoḍhārinigrahaḥ || 12-63

12-63. Hanuman first comforted Sita by conveying to her Lord Ram's pleasant message of reassurance to her, then he confronted the demons and killed Akshaya Kumar (the son of Ravana) who had been sent by the demon chief to catch the intruder and bring him to his court. Thereafter, for a little while he allowed himself to be held captive by the demons, and then vented his ire on the demons by burning their city of Lanka.

[Note--This entire episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 20; and (ii) Doha no. 24-to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.

It so happened that Hanuman felt very hungry and began eating fruits in the royal garden of Ravana. In the process, he ruined the garden. When Ravana was informed by demon guards, he sent his son Akshaya Kumar to tackle the mysterious intruder who had the temerity to run amok in his favourite palace garden. In the confrontation that followed, Hanuman slayed the prince. Stung, Ravana sent his other son Meghanad to capture Hanuman. Meghanad used a weapon known as 'Brahmastra', i.e. a weapon that cannot fail to accomplish its task. Hanuman decided to yield to it so as to protect its glory and powers. He was thus tied and taken to the court of Ravana. An angry and acrimonious verbal duel took place between Hanuman and Ravana, which so much infuriated the demon king that he ordered that Hanuman's tail be set on fire so that he goes back to his Lord with a deformed body that would be reminiscent of the deformation of Supernakha by Lord Ram, and a befitting retribution for her insult. For this purpose, layers of oil-soaked cloth were wrapped around Hanuman's tail and then set on fire. But Ravana had miscalculated Hanuman's abilities, as the latter immediately freed himself, and by jumping from building to building and dragging the long tube of burning cloth behind him, he set the whole city ablaze. Then he jumped into the ocean to douse the flames, returned to take leave from Sita, and then returned home to meet Lord Ram in Kishkindha.]

Verse no. 64:

प्रत्यभिज्ञानरत्नम् च रामायादर्शयत्कृती।

हृदयम् स्वयमायातम् वैदेह्या इव मूर्तिमत्॥ १२-६४

pratyabhijñānaratnam ca rāmāyādarśayatkr̥tī |
hṛdayam svayamāyātam vaidehyā iva mūrtimat || 12-64

12-64. Overwhelmed with joy at the success of his mission, Hanuman asked Sita to give him some kind of token to be taken back to Lord Ram to convince him that he has indeed met her, in the same way as the Lord had given his finger-ring for identification. So Sita gave the jewel she wore in her hairs (a jewelled hair-pin). Hanuman returned to Lord Ram and showed him this piece of evidence of his meeting with Sita. The Lord heartily welcomed him and embraced the jewel sent by Sita to his heart, treating it as a symbolic presence of Sita in a physical form.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

Verse no. 65:

स प्राप हृदयन्यस्तमणिस्पर्शनिमीलितः।
अपयोधरसंसर्गाम् प्रियालिङ्गननिर्वृतिम्॥ १२-६५

sa prāpa hrdayanyastamanīsparśanimīlitaḥ|
apayodharasamsargām priyāliṅgananirvṛtim || 12-65

12-65. Lord Ram placed the jewelled hair-pin of Sita close to his heart and closed his eyes to indicate that he has become very emotional as if he is virtually enjoying embracing her in a symbolic way.

Verse no. 66:

श्रुत्वा रामः प्रियोदन्तम् मेने तत्सङ्गमोत्सुकः।
महार्णवपरिक्षेपम् लङ्कायाः परिखालघुम्॥ १२-६६

śrutvā rāmaḥ priyodantam mene tatsaṅgamotsukaḥ|
mahārṇavaparikṣepam laṅkāyāḥ parikhālaghum || 12-66

12-66. After hearing the news of Sita, Lord Ram became very eager to meet her at the shortest possible time. This eagerness was so profound that the vast ocean that formed a broad and deep moat around the fort of Lanka seemed nothing but a small and shallow trough or drain to him, something that could be easily stepped across in order to reach her.

Verse no. 67:

स प्रतस्थेऽरिनाशाय हरिसैन्यैरनुद्रुतः।
न केवलम् भुवः पृष्ठे व्योम्नि संबाधवर्तिभिः॥ १२-६७

sa pratasthe'rināśāya harisainyairanudrutah|
na kevalam bhuvaḥ prṣṭhe vyomni sambādhavartibhiḥ || 12-67

12-67. So therefore, Lord Ram marched with a huge army of monkeys and bears with a mission of eliminating the demons (and freeing Sita). His army was so vast that it covered the entire land on earth as well as the sky, creating a scene of a huge doomsday storm sweeping across the land and the firmament to wreck the realm of the demons.

[Note--A huge cloud of dust was kicked up, and there was so much excitement in the rank and file of the Lord's extensive army that soldiers were jostling and pushing forward, and many of them just got onto the shoulders of their friends and joyfully jumped from one shoulder to another as others cheered and prodded them onwards. It was a stampede like situation, but not that would trample anyone underfoot, but that which showed the enthusiasm and vigour of the soldiers.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 68:

निविष्टमुदधेः कूले तम् प्रपाद बिभीषणः।
स्नेहाद्राक्षसलक्ष्म्येव बुद्धिमाविश्य चोदितः॥ १२-६८

niviṣṭamudadheḥ kūle tam prapāda bibhīṣaṇaḥ|
snehādrākṣasalakṣmyeva buddhimāviśya coditaḥ || 12-68

12-68. When Lord Ram camped on the shore of the ocean (to devise a means to cross it), Ravana's brother Vibhishan came to meet and join Lord Ram. It appeared that the deity of the demon race had subtly hinted to him that his welfare lay in surrendering to Lord Ram and seeking his blessings before it is too late.

[Note--This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 41-to Doha no. 49. Vibhishan had tried to make his elder brother, Ravana, see sense and understand the futility of his confrontational attitude towards Lord Ram. But Ravana took it in the wrong light, treated Vibhishan disdainfully as if he was a traitor, and kicked him out of his kingdom. Frustrated Vibhishan immediately left Lanka and came to seek shelter with Lord Ram who welcomed him and accepted him in his camp.]

Verse no. 69:

तस्मै निशाचरैश्वर्यम् प्रतिशुश्राव राघवः।
काले खलु समालब्धाः फलम् बध्नन्ति नीतयः॥ १२-६९

tasmai niśācaraiśvaryaṁ pratiśuśrāva rāghavaḥ|
kāle khalu samālabdhāḥ phalam badhnanti nītayāḥ || 12-69

12-69. At that time, Lord Ram promised Vibhishan that he would make the latter the next king of Lanka¹. In fact, it was a politically prudent move by the Lord at this juncture when the clouds of war were gathering on the horizon as this promise would soon bear fruits for the Lord (because it motivated Vibhishan to help the Lord win the war in Lanka and defeat Ravana by divulging all the secrets of Lanka and its army, as well as ways to overcome the many tricks that the demons led by Ravana and others were sure to employ during the course of the war; in the final hours of the war, it was Vibhishan who told Lord Ram the secret of Ravana's long life, and how to kill him).

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes it.]

Verse no. 70:

स सेतुम् बन्धयामास प्लवगैर्लवणाम्भसि।

रसातलादिवोन्मग्नम् शेषम् स्वप्नाय शार्ङ्गिणः॥ १२-७०

sa setum bandhayāmāsa plavagairlavanāmbhasi|
rasātalādivonmagnam śeṣam svapnāya śārṅgiṇaḥ || 12-70

12-70. The long bridge of floating stones that Lord Ram got constructed over the surface of the ocean (linking its northern and southern shores) looked as if Seshnath, the celestial serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the Kshir Sagar (i.e. the celestial ocean), has himself arrived to serve his Lord by spreading or uncoiling its long body to cover the distance between the two ends of the ocean so that Lord Ram (who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) could easily go across.

[Note--The construction of the bridge has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2. Its main architects were the two monkey brothers Nala and Neel.

In those ancient times the science of construction of bridges was so advanced that no support was used to keep it floating on the heaving surface of the ocean, and all the pieces of rocks and boulders were glued together as soon as they were brought by monkey warriors from surrounding hills and mountains and dumped on the ocean at the designated site. Only its two ends were anchored to solid ground, one at the northern end and the other at the southern end.

Another wonderment is that these rocks and boulders 'floated' and did not sink in the water, which indicates that they were made of something that had a hard surface but light from within. The third astonishing fact is that all the while Ravana wasn't aware that such a mammoth task is underway right under his nose. What does this later development suggests--it simply points that none of his watchmen had the guts to go and report the matter to him out of fear of inviting his wrath. Another explanation is that Vibhishan had sent quiet messages to the guards that if they cooperated and let the army enter Lanka, then all of them would be spared, and when the throne comes to him he would liberally reward them. The next explanation is that Hanuman had assumed a gigantic form and

stood guard over the bridge as its construction progressed. When the frontier guards of Lanka saw him standing threateningly and glaring towards them, they became terrified as they had already witnessed what havoc he could unleash over them if they did not fall in line and obeyed him. And perhaps the last reason is that the fiat of Fate and the dictate of Destiny had made Ravana blind out of haughtiness and arrogance so much that in spite of all the alarming developments of late, he cared for nothing in the false belief of his invincibility and powers.]

Verse no. 71:

तेनोत्तीर्य पथा लङ्काम् रोधयामास पिङ्गलैः।
द्वितीयम् हेमप्राकारम् कुर्वद्भिरिव वानरैः॥ १२-७१

tenottīrya pathā laṅkāṃ rodhayāmāsa piṅgalaiḥ|
dvitīyam hemaprākāram kurvadbhiriva vānaraiḥ || 12-71

12-71. Having constructed the bridge, Lord Ram crossed over to Lanka with his army and laid siege of the city by ordering his monkey warriors to surround it from all sides. The monkeys had body hairs with a brownish hue, and when they encircled the city in a tight formation it looked that another fort with golden ramparts had been erected around Lanka. This second ring was in addition to the original fort with its gold-plated walls, ramparts, turrets and watch-towers.

Verse no. 72:

रणः प्रववृते तत्र भीमः प्लवग रक्षसाम्।
दिग्विजृम्भितकाकुत्स्थपौलस्त्यजयघोषणः॥ १२-७२

raṇaḥ pravavṛte tatra bhīmaḥ plavaga rakṣasām|
digvijṛmbhitakākutsthapaulastyajayaghoṣaṇaḥ || 12-72

12-72. Such a fierce and no-holds-barred tumultuous war erupted in Lanka between the demons and monkeys that their war-cries, rants and yells rang out in the sky with such high pitch that it reverberated and echoed in all the four directions of the globe.

[Note--The monkey army hailed Lord Ram and cried 'victory to Lord Ram', and likewise the demon soldiers hailed Ravana and yelled a counter slogan by shouting 'victory to Ravana'.]

Verse no. 73:

पादपाविद्धपरिघः शिलानिष्पिष्टमुद्गरः।
अतिशस्त्रनखन्यासः शैलरुग्णमतंगजः॥ १२-७३

pādapāviddhaparighaḥ śilāniṣpiṣṭamudgarah|
atiśastranakhanyāsaḥ śailarugṇamatamgajaḥ || 12-73

12-73. In the battle that ensued, the valiant monkey warriors used large tree-trunks to bash the demon soldiers and smashed the iron clubs (Parigha) which the enemy held. They rained heavy rocks on the enemy soldiers and pulverised their battle-hammers or battering-rams (Mudgar--also technically known as mallets) to smithereens. The ferocious monkeys used their long, pointed and sharp nails to gouge the flesh out of the demon enemy and inflicted such grave and deep wounds on their bodies that no physical weapon would have been able to inflict. The monkeys further bludgeoned war elephants by smashing huge rocks on their heads which left the poor animals reeling and running helter-skelter.

Verse no. 74:

**अथ रामशिरश्छेददर्शनोद्भ्रान्तचेतनाम्।
सीताम् मायेति शंसन्ती त्रिजटा समजीवयत्॥ १२-७४**

atha rāmaśiraśchedadarśanodbhrāntacetanām|
sītām māyeti śamsantī trijaṭā samajīvayat || 12-74

12-74. In the meanwhile, one demon (named Vidhyu-Jihava), who was skilled in creating illusions and false images, crafted a severed head resembling that of Lord Ram and threw it in front of Sita. When she saw it, Sita fainted out of shock and was plunged in grief. At that time, a demoness named Trijata, who was her constant companion during the days of her captivity and who was faithful to her, reassured Sita that this was a cunning ploy by the demons to deceive and tease her, and it was merely a delusion, and there was no truth in it.

Verse no. 75:

**कामम् जीवति मे नाथ इति सा विजहौ शुचम्।
प्राङ्मत्वा सत्यमस्यान्तम् जीवितास्मीति लज्जिता॥ १२-७५**

kāmam jīvati me nātha iti sā vijahau śucam|
prāṅmatvā satyamasyāntam jīvitāsmīti lajjitā || 12-75

12-75. Although Sita recovered from her shock and grief because her beloved husband, Lord Ram, was still alive, but she had other regrets--she lamented that why had she not died as soon as she saw the severed head of her beloved husband because before Trijata told her the truth she had believed that the severed head belonged to Lord Ram.

[Note--The lesson one learns from this incident is that it is not wise to act in haste and allow one's wisdom to be overcome by spur-of-the-moment emotional impulses without patiently checking facts of the case.]

Verse no. 76:

गरुडापातविश्लिष्टमेघनादास्त्रबन्धनः।

दाशरथ्योः क्षणक्लेशः स्वप्नवृत्त इवाभवत्॥ १२-७६

garuḍāpātaviśliṣṭameghanādāstrabandhanah|
dāśarathyoh kṣaṇakleśaḥ svapnavṛtta ivābhavat || 12-76

12-76. Almost at the same time, Ravana's son named Meghanad tied both Lord Ram and Laxman in a snare called 'Naga-Pasha'. {It is a sort of magical arrow that immediately turns into a serpent and tightly ties up the victim in a firm grip so that the latter is unable to move. In the demon army, only Meghanad knew how to use it.}¹

Immediately, Garud, the heavenly Eagle and the mount of Lord Vishnu, swooped down from the sky and untangled the loop by devouring the coiled serpents.

But this momentary captivity made Lord Ram and Laxman dismayed and they hoped it was merely a bad dream.

[Note--¹This incident of Meghanad ensnaring both the brothers in the Naag-Pash has been narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka (or Yuddha) Kand, at the following places: (i) Canto 44, verse nos. 35-38; (ii) Canto 45, verse no. 28; (iii) Canto 49, verse nos. 1-3; and (iv) Canto 50, verse nos. 34-37.

However, Ram Charit Manas mentions that Meghanad tied only Lord Ram in the serpent-rope: Refer-- Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 73; and (ii) Doha no. 74 along with Chaupai line nos. 10 that precedes it. No mention is made of Laxman too being tied.]

Verse no. 77:

ततो बिभेद पौलस्त्यः शक्त्या वक्षसि लक्ष्मणम्।

रामस्त्वनाहतोऽप्यासीद्विदीर्णहृदयः शुचा॥ १२-७७

tato bibheda paulastyaḥ śaktyā vakṣasi lakṣmaṇam|
rāmastvanāhato'pyāsīdvidīrṇahṛdayaḥ śucā || 12-77

12-77. When Meghanad, the son of Ravana who was born in the family of sage Pulastya, saw that the two brothers have been freed from the serpent-snare he had tied them with, he became furious, and shot a powerful and energised arrow called 'Shakti' at Laxman. This arrow was infallible and as it slammed into Laxman, the latter collapsed on the ground by its impact. Though Lord Ram was not directly hit by this weapon, but when he saw Laxman lying on the ground, his heart virtually ruptured in grief and lamentation.

[Note--This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 54.]

Verse no. 78:

स मारुतिसमानीतमहौषधिहतव्यथः।

लङ्कास्त्रीणाम् पुनश्चक्रे विलापाचार्यकम् शरैः॥ १२-७८

sa mārutisamānītamahauṣadhihatavyathah|
laṅkāstrīṇām punaścakre vilāpācāryakam śaraiḥ || 12-78

12-78. Hanuman immediately went to a remote mountain in the north and brought the life-restoring herb known as 'Sanjivani Buti'. As soon as it was administered to Laxman, he regained his consciousness and all his sufferings vanished¹.

Laxman got up and showered a ferocious volley of powerful arrows that wiped out a large number of demon warriors, making their women wail and lament loudly.

[Note--¹This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

Verse no. 79:

स नादम् मेघनादस्य धनुश्चेन्द्रायुधप्रभम्।

मेघस्येव शरत्कालो न किञ्चित्पर्यशेषयत्॥ १२-७९

sa nādam meghanādasya dhanuścendrāyudhaprabham|
meghasyeva śaratkālo na kiñcitparyaśeṣayat || 12-79

12-79. Just as the autumn season causes the rain-bearing clouds to recede and stop their rumbling, and with the clouds the rain-bow too disappears, so likewise Laxman viciously hit Meghanad and reduced his bow to splinters. {To wit, Laxman finally killed Meghanad.}

[Note--Death of Meghanad has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-16 that precede Doha no. 76.]

Verse no. 80:

कुम्भकर्णः कपीन्द्रेण तुल्यावस्थः स्वसुः कृतः।

रुरोध रामम् शृङ्गीव टङ्कच्छिन्नमनःशिलः॥ १२-८०

kumbhakarnaḥ kapīndreṇa tulyāvasthaḥ svasuḥ kṛtaḥ |
rurodha rāmam śṛṅgīva ṭaṅkacchinmanamaḥśīlaḥ || 12-80

12-80. Meanwhile, Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, chopped off the nose of Kumbhakarna (the brother of Ravana), making the latter resemble Supernakha whose ears and nose had been cut-off earlier by Laxman in Panchavati. With streams of blood gushing out from his cavernous face, Kumbhakarna looked very hideous. He stood before Lord Ram and blocked his way as if a huge rock had been struck off the cliff-face of a huge mountain and had fallen down on the ground to block the Lord's way, with a stream of dirty red water gushing out from the side where the rock had been struck with a large axe.

Verse no. 81:

अकाले बोधितो भ्राता प्रियस्वप्नो वृथा भवान्।
रामेषुभिरितीवासौ दीर्घनिद्राम् प्रवेशितः॥ १२-८१

akāle bodhito bhrātā priyasvapno vṛthā bhavān |
rāmeṣubhiritīvāsau dīrghanidrām praveśitaḥ || 12-81

12-81. The arrows of Lord Ram made him fall to the ground and lie prostrate as if the Lord had granted him his favourite pastime of deep slumber. It appeared that the Lord was telling him that "you love sleeping a lot and your brother Ravana had unnecessarily disturbed you by waking you up; so go to sleep eternally now, when no one would wake you up in future."

[Note--The death of Kumbhakarna is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 71.]

Verse no. 82:

इतराण्यपि रक्षांसि पेतुर्वानरकोटिषु।
रजांसि समरोत्थानि तच्छोणितनदीष्विव॥ १२-८२

itarāṇyapi rakṣāṁsi peturvānarakoṭiṣu |
rajāṁsi samarotthāni tacchoṇitanadīṣviva || 12-82

12-82. Countless demon warriors continued to fall dead on the battle-field teeming with monkey warriors, and the blood flowing from the wounded and dead soldiers formed a river of thick red liquid whose surface had become muddy with the dust and the grime raised from the battle-field.

Verse no. 83:

निर्ययावथ पौलस्त्यः पुनर्युद्धाय मन्दिरात्।
अरावणमरामम् वा जगदद्येति निश्चितः॥ १२-८३

niryayāvatha paulastyaḥ punaryuddhāya mandirāt|
arāvaṇamarāmam vā jagadadyeti niścitaḥ || 12-83

12-83. Finally, Ravana came out on the battle-field from his palace, with a firm resolve that today either he would live or Lord Ram would live in this world.

{Ravana decided to fight to the end, with a firm determination that by the end of the battle, either he would die or Lord Ram would die. He decided that there would be no compromise and no limits would be observed in the combat. It was a final call for a do-or-die for him. With almost his entire clan having been wiped out by now, there was nothing more for Ravana to lose.}

Verse no. 84:

रामम् पदातिमालोक्य लङ्केशम् च वरूथिनम्।
हरियुग्यम् रथम् तस्मै प्रजिघाय पुरंदरः॥ १२-८४

rāmam padātimālokya laṅkeśam ca varūthinam|
hariyugyam ratham tasmai prajighāya puraṇdarah || 12-84

12-84. When Indra (the king of heaven) observed that Ravana was riding a chariot while Lord Ram was on foot, he sent his own chariot which had horses with golden hides.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 89.]

Verse no. 85:

तमाधूतध्वजपटम् व्योमगङ्गोर्मिवायुभिः।
देवसूतभुजालम्बी जैत्रमध्यास्त राघवः॥ १२-८५

tamādhūtadhvajapaṭam vyomagaṅgormivāyubhiḥ|
devasūtabhujālambī jaitramadhyāsta rāghavaḥ || 12-85

12-85. That celestial chariot's banners fluttered with the breeze of the upper reaches of the firmament, and its charioteer named Matali held Lord Ram by the hand and made him board it.

{Since it was no ordinary chariot but the one belonging the gods, it was high as the sky, and its flags and banners almost touched the sky. This chariot was always victorious in all the many campaigns that Indra had undertaken against the demons earlier.}

Verse no. 86:

मातलिस्तस्य माहेन्द्रमामुमोच तनुच्छदम्।
यत्रोत्पलदलक्लैब्यमस्त्राण्यापुः सुरदिवषाम्॥ १२-८६

mātalistasya māhendramāmumoca tanucchadam|
yatrotpaladalaklaibyamastṛāṇyāpuḥ suradviṣām || 12-86

12-86. Lord Ram put on the body-covering armour that Matali (the charioteer) gave him. This armour was such that no kind of weapon of the demons would have any effect on it, and any arrow or other kind of weapon that the demons would likely use against the Lord would have the effect of a soft lotus flower striking against it.

{This armour ensured that no injury would come to Lord Ram henceforth. It was crucial at this juncture because Ravana would certainly use the most potent of weapons he had in his arsenal to somehow subdue the Lord. Earlier in the war, Lord Ram and Laxman had been seriously injured a lot many times, but after riding this chariot and wearing the armour sent by Indra, Lord Ram did not suffer any such injury during the last phases of the war.}

Verse no. 87:

अन्योन्यदर्शनप्राप्तविक्रमावसरम् चिरात्।
रामरावणयोर्युद्धम् चरितार्थमिवाभवत्॥ १२-८७

anyonyadarśanaprāptavikramāvasaram cirāt|
rāmarāvaṇayoryuddham caritārthamivābhavat || 12-87

12-87. Lord Ram and Ravana came face-to-face after a long time¹. So therefore, both got a chance to show-case their valour, courage, power and strength in a face-to-face combat. It appeared that it was the day when two mighty warriors had given the deity of war its glory and fame.

{Both Lord Ram and Ravana employed the best of skills that they possessed in the art of warfare, using weapons and manoeuvres expertly. The deity of war smiled and cheered both of them.}

[Note--¹When was the first time that Lord Ram had had a glimpse of Ravana? Prior to the start of the war, Ravana had gone to a viewing gallery on the citadel of his fort to watch some musical and dance programme. Lord Ram wandered where this music was coming from. At that time, Vibhishan had told the Lord that Ravana had the habit of enjoying music and dance at a gallery facing the ocean. Then, as if to challenge Ravana, Lord Ram had shot an arrow that fell the demon chief's ceremonial royal umbrella, crown and other paraphernalia of royalty. This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 10; and Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 88:

भुजमूर्धोरुबाहुल्यादेकोऽपि धनदानुजः।
ददृशे हययथापूर्वो मातृवंश इव स्थितः॥ १२-८८

bhujamūrdhorubāhulyādeko'pi dhanadānujaḥ|
dadṛśe hyayathāpūrvo mātṛvaṁśa iva sthitaḥ || 12-88

12-88. Since the majority of the demon soldiers had been killed in the war, Ravana was alone in the battle-field. But with his huge ten heads, necks and shoulders, as well as ten pairs of hands he gave the impression that he was not alone but accompanied by many ferocious demons.

Verse no. 89:

जेतारम् लोकपालानाम् स्वमुखैरर्चितेश्वरम्।
रामस्तुलितकैलासमारातिम् बहवमन्यत॥ १२-८९

jetāram lokapālānām svamukhairarciteśvaram|
rāmastulitakailāsamārātim bahvamanyata || 12-89

12-89. When Lord Ram saw Ravana who had vanquished Indra and many other custodians of the four corners of the world, who had offered his own heads as sacrifice to Lord Shiva, and who had lifted Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) on the tip of his finger¹, the Lord thought that today he had a befitting opponent before him, one whose valour, strength, powers and abilities were unmatched in this world.

[Note--¹Ravana's remarkable achievements have been listed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 22; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 25; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5, 8 that precede Doha no. 28.]

Verse no. 90:

तस्य स्फुरति पौलस्त्यः सीतासंगमशंसिनि।
निचखानाधिकक्रोधः शरम् सव्येतरे भुजे॥ १२-९०

tasya sphurati paulastyah sītāsaṅgamaśaṁsini|
nicakhānādhikakrodhaḥ śaram savyetare bhuje || 12-90

12-90. Infuriated Ravana shot an arrow on the right arm of Lord Ram which was throbbing subtly as a good omen to the Lord that much time was not left before he would be united with Sita.

[Note--Ravana was an expert in such signals and omens. So he decided to demoralise Lord Ram by hitting him on his right arm, thinking that the Lord would take it as a bad omen.]

Verse no. 91:

रावणस्यापि रामास्तो भित्त्वा हृदयमाशुगः।
विवेश भुवमाख्यातुमुरगेभ्य इव प्रियम्॥ १२-९१

rāvaṇasyāpi rāmāsto bhittvā hrdayamāśuḡaḥ|
viveśa bhuvamākhyātumuragebhya iva priyam || 12-91

12-91. The final arrow that Lord Ram shot at Ravana bored a hole in his body, pierced his heart, and exited from the opposite side to enter the earth, as if it has gone to the subterranean world to inform the naagas (the serpents living in the lower world or the netherworld which is, according to mythology, the abode of the dead under the surface of the earth) about Ravana's death.

[Note--According to standard versions of the Ramayana, the combat between Ravana and Lord Ram lasted for 7days, ending on the tenth day of the bright half of the lunar month. The day of Ravana's death is commemorated as 'dusshera'. However, Kalidas has summarised the entire battle in verse no. 87-101 in his inimitable style of employing similies and analogies to drive home the point of each verse.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 103.]

Verse no. 92:

वचसैव तयोर्वाक्यमस्त्रमस्त्रेण निघ्नतोः।
अन्योन्यजयसंरम्भो ववृधे वादिनोरिव॥ १२-९२

vacasaiva tayorvākyamastramastreṇa nighnatoh|
anyonyajayasaṁrambho vavṛdhe vādinoriva || 12-92

12-92. Just as two adversaries use words to vehemently argue with and counter each other, and in the process also become angry and shout at each other till the time one is able to defeat his opponent, so likewise the two challengers, Lord Ram and Ravana, used all sorts of weapons at their disposal to strike at the opponent in their bid to defeat the latter, becoming angry and wrathful in the process till the end when the result was finally out--with Lord Ram emerging victorious, and Ravana defeated and dead.

[Note--It was not a civil debate between two scholars or a courtroom where lawyers argue on behalf of their clients, but it was a battle-field and a ferocious war was raging.

In this scenario, the adversaries were combatants locked in a the middle of a do-or-die ferocious battle, where no formalities and etiquettes of civil society are observed.

So one can well imagine how terrifying the duel might have been, and why no limits of aggression and use of the most powerful weapons were observed. The aim was to win the war, and not show courtesies of a king's court or the etiquettes of a nobleman's drawing room.]

Verse no. 93:

**विक्रमव्यतिहारेण सामान्याऽभूद्वयोरपि।
जयश्रीरन्तरा वेदिर्मत्तवारणयोरिव॥ १२-९३**

vikramavyatihāreṇa sāmānyā'bhūddvayorapi|
jayaśrīrantarā vedirmattavāraṇayoriva || 12-93

12-93. At one point of time Lord Ram would have an upper hand by the display of his unmatched valour and skills, while at the other time it was the turn of Ravana to push back at the Lord by using his own legendary abilities. The result was that the 'deity of victory' could not decide whom to favour, and it kept on switching sides according to the reality on the ground. It was like the case of a combat between two muscular male elephants in a state of rut, when both clash with each other vigorously, and every moment the situation changes so that no is able to predict which of the two combatants would finally win.

Verse no. 94:

**कृतप्रतिकृतप्रीतैस्तयोर्मुक्ताम् सुरासुरैः।
परस्परशरव्राताः पुष्पवृष्टिम् न सेहिरे॥ १२-९४**

kṛtapratikṛtaprītaistayormuktām surāsuraiḥ|
parasparaśaravrātāḥ puṣpavrṣṭim na sehire || 12-94

12-94. When Lord Ram shot arrows at Ravana or fended off the latter's arrows, then the gods showered flowers on the Lord. In the next moment, when Ravana shot arrows at Lord Ram and deflected the Lord's arrows streaking towards him, then the gods would shower flowers on Ravana. The situation changed so rapidly, and the arrows flew in both the directions so thick and fast that the flowers showered by the gods had no time to fall on either of the two combatants and reach the ground, as they were cut to pieces mid-air and scattered all around (to give the impression that the gods were applauding both the warriors, and showering flower-petals on all the other great warriors who participated in this rare war to praise them all for their valour, courage, dare-devilry and martial skills).

Verse no. 95:

अयःशङ्कुचिताम् रक्षः शतघ्नीमथ शत्रवे।
हताम् वैवस्वतस्येव कूटशाल्मलिमक्षिपत्॥ १२-९५

ayaḥśaṅkucitām rakṣaḥ śataghñīmatha śatrave|
hṛtām vaivasvatasyeva kūṭaśālmalimakṣipat || 12-95

12-95. Then Ravana violently hurled at his enemy (Lord Ram) a mace with an intention to kill the latter. This mace was as strong and fatal as 'Shalmali', the one used by Yam-
raja, the patron god of death and hell, and it was studded with spikes made of iron nails that had sharp needle-like ends.

Verse no. 96:

राघवो रथमप्राप्ताम् तामाशाम् च सुरदिवषाम्।
अर्धचन्द्रमुखैर्बाणैश्चिच्छेद कदलीसुखम्॥ १२-९६

rāghavo rathamaprāptām tāmāsām ca suradviṣām|
ardhacandramukhairbāṇaiściccheda kadalīsukham || 12-96

12-96. The demons who were watching the combat were sure that Lord Ram would certainly fall prey to this mace and die. But the Lord sliced off this weapon before it could reach his chariot by using an arrow with a sickle-like or crescent shaped end with as much ease as one would cut off the soft stem of a plantain plant, thereby dashing all the hopes of victory of the demon forces.

Verse no. 97:

अमोघम् संदधे चास्मै धनुष्येकधनुर्धरः।
ब्राह्ममस्त्रम् प्रियाशोकशल्यनिष्कर्षणौषधम्॥ १२-९७

amogham saṁdadhe cāsmāi dhanuṣyekadhanurdharaḥ|
brāhmamastram priyāśokaśalyaniṣkarṣaṇauṣadham || 12-97

12-97. The matchless archer Lord Ram mounted an infallible arrow known as 'Brahmastra' on his bow to kill Ravana. This arrow never went in vain. It was like an infallible remedy to remove the cause of all the sorrows of Sita (represented by Ravana).

Verse no. 98:

तद्व्योम्नि शतधा भिन्नम् ददृशे दीप्तिमन्मुखम्।
वपुर्महोरगस्येव करालफलमण्डलम्॥ १२-९८

tadvyomni śatadhā bhinnam dadṛśe dīptimanmukham|
vapurmahoragasyeva karālaphalamaṇḍalam || 12-98

12-98. When shot, that Brahmastra spread out in the sky in the form of countless darts with fiery tips as if the angry celestial serpent known as Seshnath has descended from the heaven, hissing violently, with all its hoods spread out and all its fangs bared.

Verse no. 99:

तेन मन्त्रप्रयुक्तेन निमेषार्धादपातयत्।
स रावणशिरःपङ्क्तिमज्ञातव्रणवेदनाम्॥ १२-९९

tena mantraprayuktena nimeṣārdhādapātayat|
sa rāvaṇaśiraḥpaṅktimajñātavraṇavedanām || 12-99

12-99. Lord Ram had invoked relevant Mantras (mystical formulae) to power this Brahmastra, and it immediately chopped-off all the ten heads of Ravana in half a second so fast that the latter felt no pain and did not suffer the pangs of death.

[Note--Lord Ram has shown the immensity of his grace here. Though Ravana was a cruel demon and had caused immense sufferings to all living beings during his lifetime, but Lord Ram ensured that his last moment was painless and peaceful. Glory to Lord Ram!!

That said, and without prejudice to whatever has been said about the sort of weapon employed by Lord Ram to sever the ten heads of Ravana, let us analyse what the Lord must have surely done from a practical point of view. Ravana had ten heads arranged next to each other in a horizontal plane, with as many necks protruding out from his single trunk. These heads weren't stacked one above the other like a stack of books or flats in an apartment building. Normally a bow is held erect in a vertical position, with one end pointing upwards towards the sky, and the other end towards the ground. The archer grips the bow in the middle, puts an arrow on it so that its rear end touches the bow's string, then pulls the string along with the arrow as much back as he can, and then releases the string. The forward thrust of the released string gives the arrow a push and it flies towards its aimed object with a great velocity.

Now, Ravana had a boon from Lord Shiva that if one of his heads is severed then a new one would immediately spring up to replace it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 25.} So, as soon as Lord Ram would cut-off his head by the conventional method of shooting an arrow aimed at the neck which bore the particular head, the head immediately grew back again. It grew up in a fraction of a second, so by the time the Lord mounted and shot another arrow aimed at the next head, the first one was back on the neck. Lord Ram had tried to kill him by cutting his heads over and over again, but Ravana's form remained intact. Even with one head severed, Ravana's other nine heads remained firmly in place, giving him the needed time to signal his body to replace the lost head. And so therefore, Ravana continued to survive. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 101-b along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.}

Lord Ram was bewildered at this mysterious development. He had to devise a strategy to ensure that all the ten heads of Ravana are severed at one go, simultaneously, so that his trunk becomes headless, and with all the heads gone he would also have lost his data-bank and control-and-command center housed in his ten brains, which in turn would mean that there would be no one in charge to send the required signal to his body's rejuvenating capacity to create new heads to replace the one's that were severed. So the Lord thought over the matter: what should be done?

Soon, the Lord struck on a strategy that was plain and simple--instead of holding the bow erect in a vertical position as is the convention, he turned it into a horizontal position or plane. Now, he quickly placed ten powerful arrows adjacent to each other on it, pulled the string, and released all these ten arrows simultaneously. As a result, obviously, all the ten arrows zoomed forward with equal velocity, side-by-side in a parallel formation. They sliced through Ravana's neck, felling all the ten heads simultaneously, and entered the earth on the opposite side. With all the heads and their respective brains gone, there was no command-and-control center left that would signal Ravana's body to recover, and therefore the trunk collapsed to the ground.

In the context of Ravana having 'ten heads', there is a very interesting thing that is sure to draw one's attention. Ten heads means as many 'brains' or 'minds', i.e. Ravana had ten brains or ten minds working for him simultaneously, in close coordination with each other much like a super computer. This means that the ability of Ravana to understand and analyse any situation was ten times more and faster than others, and it also translates in practice to imply that he could devise strategies and execute them ten times quicker than his adversary, leaving the latter reeling and dazed. This is the reason why no one could defeat Ravana or out-maneuver him.]

Verse no. 100:

बालार्कप्रतिमेवाप्सु वीचिभिन्ना पतिष्यतः।

राराज रक्षःकायस्य कण्ठच्छेदपरम्परा॥ १२-१००

bālārkapratimevāpsu vīcibhinnā paṭiṣyataḥ|

rarāja rakṣaḥkāyasya kaṇṭhacchedaparamparā || 12-100

12-100. The falling heads of Ravana looked like the rays of the sun being reflected in the ripples formed on the surface of a river.

[Note--Just like the same sun appears to be many in number when its image is reflected in the ripples on the surface of the water in early hours, so likewise the ten heads of Ravana appeared to be countless in numbers when viewed in the background of the turmoil in the battle-field.]

Verse no. 101:

मरुताम् पश्यताम् तस्य शिरांसि पतितान्यपि।

मनो नातिविशस्वास पुनःसंधानशङ्किनाम्॥ १२-१०१

marutām paśyatām tasya śirāṁsi patitānyapi|
mano nātivīśasvāsa punaḥsāndhānaśaṅkinām || 12-101

12-101. Even after seeing the severed heads of Ravana, the gods could not believe that he had died, because they feared that these heads might join the trunk of Ravana once again, or some new head would spring-up from the place where the heads had been cut-off.

Verse no. 102:

अथ मदगुरुपक्षैलोकपालद्विपाना मनुगतमलिवृन्दैर्गण्डभित्तीर्विहाय।

उपनतमणिबन्धे मूर्ध्नि पौलस्त्यशत्रोः सुरभिः सुरविमुक्तम् पुष्पवर्षम् पपात॥ १२-१०२

atha madagurupakṣailokapāladvipānā manugata malivṛndairgaṇḍabhittīrvihāya|
upanatamaṇibandhe mūrdhni paulastyaśatroḥ
surabhi suravimuktam puṣpavarṣam papāta || 12-102

12-102. The gods showered fragrant flowers dripping with sweet nectar on Lord Ram which attracted bees who had wet wings as they had been hitherto engaged in drinking the scented viscous liquid effusing out from the temples of mature elephants belonging to the guardians of the different quarters. The fragrance of the flowers that were showered on Lord Ram was so enchanting and their nectar so sweet that these bees abandoned their earlier engagement with the elephants and came in hordes to form swarms around the head of Lord Ram who was soon to be crowned (as the king of Ayodhya).

Verse no. 103:

यन्ता हरेः सपदि संहतकार्मुकज्य मापृच्छय राघवमनुष्ठितदेवकार्यम्।

नामाङ्करावणशराङ्कितकेतुयष्टि मूर्ध्वम् रथम् हरिसहस्रयुजम् निनाय॥ १२-१०३

yantā hareḥ sapadi saṁhṛtakārmukajya
māpṛcchya rāghavamanuṣṭhitadevakāryam|
nāmāṅkarāvaṇaśarāṅkitaketuyaṣṭi
mūrdhvam ratham harisahasrayujam nināya || 12-103

12-103. After Ravana's death, Lord Ram loosened the string of his bow, because after having accomplished the work of the gods (which was to eliminate the demons and their king Ravana), there was no need to keep the bow stringed and battle-ready.

Indra's charioteer Matali took leave from Lord Ram and went back to heaven with his chariot that had thousands of horses. The flagstaff of that chariot still had the remnants of countless arrows, bearing the insignia of Ravana, stuck on its side.

Verse no. 104:

रघुपतिरपि जातवेदोविशुद्धाम् प्रगृह्य प्रियाम्
 प्रियसुहृदि बिभीषणे संगमय्य श्रियम् वैरिणः।
 रविसुतसहितेन तेनानुयातः ससौमित्रिणा
 भुजविजितविमानरत्नाधिरूढः प्रतस्थे पुरीम्॥ १२-१०४

raghupatirapi jātavedośuddhām pragṛhya priyām
 priyasuhr̥di bibhīṣaṇe saṅgamayya śriyam vairiṇaḥ|
 ravisutasahitena tenānuyātaḥ sasaumitriṇā
 bhujavijitavimānaratnādhirūḍhaḥ pratasthe purīm || 12-104

12-104. Lord Ram bestowed the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishan who was his friend as well as the younger brother of Ravana¹. {The victorious Lord Ram ensured that the inheritance of the demon kingdom remained within the family of sage Pulastya. Vibhishan was the natural inheritor of the crown as a younger brother of its erstwhile king Ravana. Lord Ram had no greed for kingdoms, and he had to wage this war to fulfil his promise given to the gods long ago because Ravana had unleashed a reign of terror and cruelty in this creation².}

Thereafter, after ensuring that Sita is purified by the sacred fire, the Lord accepted her³. {By putting Sita to the fire-test, the Lord ensured that all her taints and impurities associated by remaining alone in a dirty atmosphere of the demon kingdom were burnt, and only her purified form lived³.}

Then Lord got aboard the Pushpak plane that he had won by default after his conquest of Lanka. He was accompanied by his chief friends such as Sugriv and Vibhishan, as well as his brother Laxman, and of course Sita, and then headed to his capital city of Ayodhya⁴.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 108 along with Chaupai line no. 14 that precede it; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 109.

⁴The Pushpak plane belonged to Ravana, and when Vibhishan ascended the throne it came to him as part of other assets of Lanka. Vibhishan had loaded it with gems and placed it before Lord Ram as a token of thanksgiving. However, the Lord asked Vibhishan to go to the sky and shower the valuables so that the monkeys could get whatever suited them. When the time came for departure for Ayodhya, Lord Ram requested Vibhishan to bring this plane so that he could go back by the air-route, as going back by land would take a long time. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i)

Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 117-to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 118; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 119.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये द्वादशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye dvādaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 12th Canto of Kalidas's Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 13, verse nos. 1-79:

Introduction

After the conquest of Lanka and accepting Sita after her purification by the fire, Lord Ram boarded the Pushpak plane along with her, his brother Laxman, Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, Vibhishan, the new lord of the demons of Lanka, Jamvant, the bear king, chief commanders of his army from Kishkindha, as well his trusted lieutenants such as Hanuman and Angad, and headed home to Ayodhya. This Canto primarily describes the Lord's journey home by the air-route, wherein he shows Sita all the important landmarks he had passed through during his long journey from Ayodhya to Lanka.

As the Pushpak plane moved towards Ayodhya, Lord Ram pointed out one-by-one the landmarks below: first came the vast ocean, then the forest of Dandakaranya, the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, especially the hill-top where she had thrown one of her jewels down when she saw a group of monkeys sitting in a huddle, with the aim that if Lord Ram came that way then they would show her jewels to him and help the Lord decide the direction in which she was being taken by Ravana. The Lord also told her how creepers, the leaves, and the deer and other animals on the ground had guided him by waving and nodding towards the south to hint to him that Sita had been taken away in that direction. Then the Lord sequentially showed her the charming environments of Mt. Vindhya and the Pampa lake, the beautiful Godavari river, his hermitage at Panchavati where Supernakha had been deformed, the many hermitages of great sages such as Sutikshan, Sharbhang and Agastya, the high peaks of Chitrakoot mountains, the clean waters of river Mandakani, sage Atri's and his wife Anusuiya's hermitage, Prayagraj where the three great rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati had their union, the kingdom of Nishad of the boatmen community, and finally the holy river Saryu on the bank of which the city of Ayodhya was situated.

At Ayodhya, his beloved and faithful brother Bharat, who had withdrawn from the city and spent time as a hermit at a place called Nandigram on the outskirts, and had been taking care of the kingdom in the Lord's absence from there, came forward to warmly welcome the Lord home. As the plane approached Ayodhya, the Lord could see dust being raised in the sky, and so he told Sita that he was sure that it was due to the march of a huge army that Bharat is leading to welcome him home. And indeed it was so, because as soon as the news of the Lord's arrival reached Ayodhya, everyone, from

ministers and the royal priest Vashistha to ordinary citizens gathered to form a huge and grand procession to receive the Lord.

Finally the plane landed on the ground near Nandigram, and Lord Ram embraced Bharat and Shatrughan. Subsequently, everyone met each other with due respect, exchanged greetings and asked about each other's welfare. Then, after the initial embraces and show of joy, Lord Ram instructed his friends from Lanka, i.e. Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad as well as Vibhishan and his companions to proceed to the city on elephants and chariots that had been brought by Bharat to take Lord Ram back to the city, while the Lord himself boarded the Pushpak plane along with Laxman and Bharat to proceed to Ayodhya by the air route. Bharat met Sita aboard the plane and paid his respects to her.

In the meantime, Sugriv, Vibhishan, Jamvant and other friends of the Lord had assumed human forms, and the Lord introduced them to sage Vashistha, Bharat and others.

The procession moved back to Ayodhya on foot, while Lord Ram followed it on the plane from the rear. Midway, after travelling for about half a kosha (roughly one mile), the Lord took a brief halt at a royal garden that had been readied by Shatrughan to welcome the Lord and be available to him for a short rest before actually entering the city.

This is the main theme of this Canto no. 13. The events narrated here are also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 119 -to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 121; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 3-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 10.

With this background information, let us now commence reading the text in detail as follows:

Verse no. 1:

अथात्मनः शब्दगुणमगुणञ्च पदम्विमानेन विगाहमानः।

रत्नाकरम्वीक्ष्य मिथः स जायाम् रामाभिधानो हरिरित्युवाच॥ १३-१

athātmanah śabdaguṇamguṇajñyaḥ padamvimānena vigāhamānaḥ |
ratnākaramvīkṣya mithaḥ sa jāyām rāmābhidhāno harirityuvāca || 13-1

13-1. As the Pushpak plane, which had the special quality of being able to be guided or steered by voice signals or commands, flew in the sky and was over the ocean, at that time Lord Ram, who was a personified form of the omniscient Lord Vishnu, spoke privately to his wife (who was seated next to him aboard the plane) as follows:-

[Note--In the verses that follow herein below, Lord Ram would point out all the landmarks on the ground as the plane flew overhead towards Ayodhya. Obviously, these landmarks will be in the reverse order of sequence from what the Lord had followed during his outward journey to Lanka. Ocean was the first such landmark. The Lord had

pointed out the bridge he had got constructed to get across--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 119-a.]

Verse no. 2:

वैदेहि पश्यऽमलयादिवभक्तम् मत्सेतुना फेनिलमम्बुराशिम्।
छायापथेनेव शरत्प्रसन्नम् आकाशमाविष्कृतचारुतारम्॥ १३-२

vaidehi paśya"malayādvibhaktam matsetunā phenilamamburāśim |
chāyāpatheneva śaratprasannam ākāśamāviṣṭacārutāram || 13-2

13-2. The Lord said to Sita: "Oh Vaidehi (Sita)! Have a look at the heaving ocean with its frothy waves below. The bridge that I got constructed on its surface had divided this immense reservoir of salty water as far as Mt. Malaya¹ in the same way as the celestial strip of the bright 'milky way' divides the firmament dotted by countless twinkling stars into two halves.

[Note--¹Mt. Malaya is the chain of mountains spreading across the southern edge of the Indian sub-continent, and in some texts it also refers to the mountain range on the northern edge of the island of Lanka. So therefore, Lord Ram told Sita that the bridge he had got constructed linked these two mountain ranges, with its one end on the land of India, and its other end on the land of Lanka.]

Verse no. 3:

गुरोरियक्षोः कपिलेन मेध्ये रसातलम्संक्रमिते तुरंगे।
तदर्थमूर्वोमवधारयद्भिः पूर्वैः किलायम्परिवर्धितो नः॥ १३-३

guroriyakṣoḥ kapilena medhye rasātalamsaṁkramite turamge |
tadarthamurvīmavadhārayadbhiḥ pūrvaiḥ kilāyamparivardhito naḥ || 13-3

13-3. Sita, do you know how this ocean came into being? Well, in an ancient time, one of my forefathers named Sagar was doing a Ashwa-medha Yagya (the horse sacrifice). At that time, Indra, the king of gods and heaven, had stolen the sacrificial horse and hid it in the hermitage of sage Kapil. Sagar's sixty-thousand sons decided to find the horse, and so they dug up large swathes of the earth to locate it. The ocean owes its origin to this deep and wide trough they created on the surface of the earth. Since they circled around the earth while digging in search of the horse, the ocean that resulted also girdles the earth's all around its surface.

Again, since king Sagar was our ancestor and had been doing the horse-sacrifice when his sacrificial horse was stolen, and the earth was dug up by his sons to trace the horse, therefore the ocean is honoured by our family. Further, it is called 'Sagar' after the name of the king on whose behalf it was created.

Verse no. 4:

गर्भमदधत्यर्कमरीचयोऽस्मात् विवृद्धिमत्राश्नुवते वसूनि।
अबिन्धनम्वह्निमसौ बिभर्ति प्रह्लादनमज्योतिरजन्यनेन॥ १३-४

garbhamdadhatyarkamarīcayo'smāt vivṛddhimatrāśnuvate vasūni |
abindhanamvahnimasau bibharti prahlādanamjyotirajanyanena || 13-4

13- 4. This ocean is no ordinary reservoir of water, but it has some remarkable characters which have given it great glory. I shall tell you some of these rare qualities of the ocean that has made it so honourable.

See, it is from it that the sun's rays extract water in the form of water-vapour, and later on the same water is poured back on earth as rain by the clouds, thereby sustaining life in the world.

It is a great treasury of underwater gems and other treasures.

It is so magnanimous that it even harbours its enemy, the subterranean fire known as Barwanal, in its bosom. This fire is absolutely essential not only to sustain marine life by keeping the water warm but also by keeping the earth warm and making it habitable.

And it is from it that the Moon, which lights up the sky during the darkness of the night, was born. {And that is why the water of the ocean heaves to form high tide during the full moon night as the deity of the ocean expresses its joy at the sight of the moon.}

Verse no. 5:

ताम्रतामवस्थाम्प्रतिपद्यमानम् स्थितमदश व्याप दिशो महिम्ना।
विष्णोरिवास्यानवधारणीयम् ईदृक्तया रूपमियत्ताया वा॥ १३-५

Tāmtāmavasthāmpratipadyamānam sthitamdaśa vyāpa diśo mahimnā |
viṣṇorivāsyānavadhāraṇīyam īdṛktayā rūpamiyattāyā vā || 13-5

13-5. This ocean keeps on changing its form, nature and shape (and that is why it has been known by different names¹), and it is so extensive that it stretches far and wide to cover all the directions of the earth. That is why just as it is not possible to precisely and definitely define Lord Vishnu and the immensity of his virtues and abilities by assigning any name to him or limiting his form to any one or more manifestations of his, so likewise it is not possible to precisely describe the ocean, measure its dimensions, and list its glories and values².

[Note--¹Primarily, the ocean is nothing but a reservoir of water, yet it has many names. Some of the examples are the Arctic, North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian and the South sea or the Antarctica. The word 'sea' is also used to represent what is basically a natural water reservoir like the ocean. Some of the seas are the Red sea, the Mediterranean sea, the Black sea, the Arabian sea, the Persian gulf, the Gulf of

Mexico, the South China sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Straits of Malacca, the Singapore straits, the Gulf of Thailand, the Adriatic sea, the Caribbean sea, and the Aegean sea.

²It is a geographical fact that almost three quarters of the earth is covered by the ocean, either in its watery form, or in its icy form. Even a causal look of the earth from outer space shows it is a blue planet because of the ocean, with its land mass appearing as some greenish scum floating scattered on the surface of this huge body of water. The glory of the ocean is that inspite of its overwhelming presence and volume of water, it never swallows up the land mass, but maintains its boundaries in a dignified manner. All the major rivers on earth empty their contents into the ocean, but the latter never gets filled or overflows its shores. During severe droughts, the rivers, ponds, lakes and wells dry up, but no one has ever heard of the ocean drying up.]

Verse no. 6:

नाभिप्ररूढाम्बुरुहासनेन संस्तूयमानः प्रथमेन धात्रा।

अमुम्युगान्तोचितयोगनिद्रः संहृत्य लोकान्पुरुषोऽधिसेते ॥ १३-६

nābhiprarūḍhāmburuhāsanena saṁstūyamānaḥ prathamena dhātrā |
amumyugāntocitayoganidraḥ saṁhr̥tya lokānpuruṣo'dhiśete || 13-6

13-6. The 'ocean' is eternal, it lasts even the end of this world when everything in existence is drowned in a gigantic deluge. At the time of this doomsday, which marks the conclusion of this world and all its life, Lord Vishnu withdraws himself into his primary cosmic form as the Primeval Being and comes here to recline in a meditative posture on the back of the coiled body of the Adi Sesh, the Primeval Serpent, who floats on the surface of the Kshir-Sagar, the cosmic ocean. The creator Brahma then emerges on a lotus flower sprouting from the navel of this Lord Vishnu (and Brahma then initiates the process of creating a new world).

{To wit, the ocean is an entity that continues to exist even when the rest of the world is ended. It exists then in the form of the all-enveloping ocean known as the Kshir-Sagar. When it is the time for a new creation to come into being, it is from this ocean that land mass emerges from its floor and rises up to its surface to harbour life which one observes on land. So while one aspect of life is born on this land mass that floats on the surface of the ocean, an equivalent aspect is born underwater in the ocean itself in the form of marine or aquatic life.}

Verse no. 7:

पक्षच्छिदा गोत्रभिदात्तगन्धाः शरण्यमेनमशतशो महीधराः।

नृपा इवोपप्लविनः परेभ्यो धर्मोत्तरम्मध्यममाश्रयन्ते ॥ १३-७

pakṣacchidā gotrabhidāttagandhāḥ śaraṇyamenaśataśo mahīdhraḥ |
nr̥pā ivopaplavināḥ parebhyo dharmottarammadhyamamāśrayante || 13-7

13-7. Just as kings who are tormented by powerful enemies against whom they feel helpless, come and seek refuge with those kings who are strong, magnanimous, and ready to offer shelter to these helpless kings, so likewise the ancient mountains, which had the ability to fly in the sky, came to take shelter in the ocean when Indra, the king of heaven, had cut-off their wings to ground them so that they won't fly again, as he thought that these flying mountains were obstructing pathways of heaven and undermining his (Indra's) authority.

{With their wings chopped-off by Indra, the flying mountains of ancient time fell down, and the gracious ocean accepted them. Some of these mountains were so terrified of Indra's wrath that they pleaded with the deity of the ocean to hide them, and the deity obliged by allowing them to stay underwater. This is how and why the ocean bed has hills and valleys of its own. Other mountains who were bolder preferred to live over the ground, and so came into being the mountains and hills we see on the land.}

Verse no. 8:

रसातलादादिभवेन पुंसा भुवः प्रयुक्तोद्वहनक्रियायाः।

अस्याच्छमम्भः प्रलयप्रवृद्धम् मुहूर्तवक्त्राभरणम्बभूव ॥ १३-८

rasātalādādibhavana puṁsā bhuvah prayuktodvahanakriyāyāḥ |
asyācchamambhaḥ pralayapravṛddham muhūrtavaktrābharaṇambabhūva || 13-8

13-8. At the beginning of creation, when the earth remained submerged in the vast reservoir of the Kshir-Sagar, Lord Vishnu decided to save it in his primitive incarnation of the Boar. The Boar lifted the earth and brought it to the surface of the ocean. At that time when the earth was basically in the form of an embryo, the ocean appeared to form a veil that surrounded it to protect it from all sides before the Boar brought forth this newly born earth (just like an embryo is protected in a mother's womb by a membrane before it emerges into this world).

[Note--In this remarkable analogy, the ocean is regarded as the mother's womb in which the embryo of the earth took shape and was nourished. When the time of birth arrives, the embryo emerges from the mother's womb, but it is still wrapped in a protective membrane of viscous mucous known as the vernix caseosa that forms a bio-film around the newly born child. Just like the case of this film being washed-off with the child's first bath, so was the case of the earth being cleared by the Boar of the frothy and dirty fluids that stuck to it at the time of its creation when it emerged from the bowls of the earth.]

Verse no. 9:

मुखार्पणेषु प्रकृतिप्रगल्भाः स्वयन्तरंगाधरदानदक्षः।

अनन्यसामान्यकलत्रवृत्तिः पिबत्यसौ पाययते च सिन्धूः ॥ १३-९

mukhārpaṇeṣu prakṛtipragalbhāḥ svayamtaraṅgādharadānadakṣaḥ |
ananyasāmānyakalatravṛttiḥ pibatyasau pāyayate ca sindhūḥ || 13-9

13-9. This ocean is remarkable in other ways also. People usually enjoy being kissed by an unknown woman, but rarely would they reciprocate this gesture by a return kiss. But this ocean is so gracious that when the rivers come to it to kiss its shores and pour their water in it to symbolise total surrender to it, the ocean not only accepts the rivers' outpouring of emotion by accepting their waters but reciprocates their gestures in the form of heaving waves that rush towards the land in order to embrace the incoming rivers and accept them in its fold.

[Note--The point where the river opens into the ocean is called the mouth of the river, and it is always wider than the rest of the river to imply that the deity of the river has opened its lips wide to kiss the deity of the ocean. In return, the deity of the ocean sends heaving waves to welcome the guest and move inland, towards the shore, to kiss the deity of the river even before it actually reaches the main body of the ocean.]

Verse no. 10:

ससत्त्वमादाय नदीमुखाम्भः संमीलयन्तो विवृताननत्वात्।
अमी तिरोभिस्तिमयः सरन्ध्रैः ऊध्वम्वितन्वन्ति जलप्रवाहान्॥ १३-१०

sasatvamādāya nadīmukhāmbhaḥ saṁmīlayanto vivṛtānanatvāt |
amī tirobhistimayaḥ sarandhraiḥ ūdhvamvitanvanti jalapravāhān || 13-10

13-10. Lord Ram pointed out to Sita an interesting scene unfolding in the ocean below: "Look there. These are huge fish (the whale) that open their mouths wide and gulp in large draughts of water and smaller fish that float in it, and then after closing their mouths they spray this water out in the form of jets that spurt out through small holes or apertures present in their heads.

Verse no. 11:

मातंगनक्रैः सहसोत्पतद्भिर्ः भिन्नान्द्विधा पश्य समुद्रफेनान्।
कपोलसंसर्पितया य एषाम् व्रजन्ति कर्णक्षणाचामरत्वम्॥ १३-११

mātaṅganakraiḥ sahasotpatadbhirḥ bhinnāndvidhā paśya samudraphenān |
kapolasamsarpitayā ya eṣām vrajanti karṇakṣaṇacāmaratvam || 13-11

13-11. The monster crocodiles, that are like elephants of the water, leap up suddenly and cause the water on the surface to foam and cleave into two--giving the impression that alligator-shaped ear-rings are dangling from the earlobes of the deity of the ocean.

[Note--The foaming surface of the ocean is likened to the head of the deity of the ocean, and when the crocodiles come to the surface they split this foam into two halves. This gives the impression that the deity of the ocean is wearing ear-rings shaped like a crocodile or an alligator.]

Verse no. 12:

वेलानिलाय प्रसृता भुजंगा वहोर्मिस्फूर्जथुनिर्विशेषाः।

सूर्याशुसंपर्कविवृद्धरागैः व्यज्यन्त एते मणिभिः फणस्थैः॥ १३-१२

velānilāya prasṛtā bhujaṅgā vahormivisphūrjathunirviśeṣāḥ |
sūryāśusamṣarparkavivṛddharāgaiḥ vyajyanta ete maṇibhiḥ phaṇasthaiḥ ||
13-12

13-12. The large waves that are seen on the surface of the ocean are actually huge sea-serpents that have come up to breathe fresh air moving in from the surrounding land, but when the rays of the sun fall on them then the jewels embedded in their heads begin to shine. This makes it possible for one to realise that these are not merely waves of the water but huge sea-serpents.

[Note--In some species of serpents, a viscous liquid effuses out from their hoods, and when it solidifies it glows in sunlight to resemble a shining jewel.

There is yet another way of interpreting this verse as follows: The huge sea-serpents emerge from the bosom of the ocean to breathe fresh air on its surface. When sunlight falls on their hoods, the gems embedded in them shines with a glitter. These are not sea-serpents actually, but huge waves on the surface of the ocean, and the sparkling light that one observes in them, that gives the impression of glittering jewels on the hoods of sea-serpents, is actually the result of sunlight being reflected from water molecules in these waves.]

Verse no. 13:

तवाधरस्पर्धिषु विद्रुमेषु पर्यस्तमेतत्सहसोर्मिवेगात्।

ऊर्ध्वाङ्कुरप्रोतमुखम्कथंचित् क्लेशादपक्रामति शङ्खयूथम्॥ १३-१३

tavādharasparधिषु vidrumeṣu paryastametatsahasormivegāt |
ūrdhvāṅkuraprotamukhamkathamcit kleśādapakrāmati śaṅkhayūtham ||
13-13

13-13. Look Sita, the marine animal known as the gastropod, which lives in its own spiralled shell and is known by the common name of a marine conch, are dashed so violently against the coral reefs of the ocean that they begin to bleed and get a red colour like the pink coloured lips of yours. They get numbed by this blow and often are stuck in the sharp edges of the coral, so that they aren't able to move as freely as earlier.

Verse no. 14:

प्रवृत्तमात्रेण पयांसि पातुम् आवर्तवेगाद्भ्रमता घनेन।

आभाति भूयिष्ठमयम्समुद्रः प्रमथ्यमानो गिरिणेव भूयः॥ १३-१४

pravṛttamātreṇa payāṁsi pātum āvartavegādbhramatā ghanena |
ābhāti bhūyiṣṭhamayamsamudraḥ pramathyamāno giriṇeva bhūyaḥ || 13-14

13-14. Look there, a dark bank of rotating clouds have lowered its snout to the surface of the ocean to drink its water by sucking it, resulting in creation of huge waves and whirlpools¹, giving the impression that the ocean is being churned by Mt. Mandrachal once again as it was done in some ancient time (when the gods and the demons had used this mountain as the churning rod to churn the celestial ocean in search of its gems and find the pitcher of nectar).

[Note--¹Lord Ram was witnessing a tornado in action.]

Verse no. 15:

दूरादयश्चक्रनिभस्य तन्वी तमालतालीवनराजिनीला।

आभाति वेला लवणाम्बुराशेः धारानिबद्धेव कलङ्करेखा॥ १३-१५

dūrādayaścakranibhasya tanvī tamālatālīvanarājīnīlā |
ābhāti velā lavaṇāmburāśeḥ dhārānibaddheva kalaṅkarekhā || 13-15

13-15. {The plane was about to reach the northern shore of the ocean. So in this verse Lord Ram describes the scene which was observed on the ground on the shore of the ocean and the surrounding areas as seen from the sky.}

Look there Sita: on the shore of the ocean are visible slender stake-like structures that are rusty-black in colour as if they are made of iron. Such structures are called palisades, and they are usually erected as fortifications to prevent intruders and invaders from entering a country from the side of the ocean or the sea. These tall pillar-like objects are actually coconut and bay-leaf plants. The shore of the ocean is lined by such trees that gives the impression of a serrated edge of a discus.

[Note--The shore of the ocean was shaped like a crescent moon, and its edge had a line of slender coconut and bay plants, some tall and others a little short, giving the impression of a discus with sharp pointed edge.]

Verse no. 16:

वेलानिलः केतकरेणुभिस्ते संभावयत्याननमायताक्षि।

मामक्षमम्मण्डनकालहानेः वेत्तीव बिम्बाधरबद्धतृष्णम्॥ १३-१६

velānilaḥ ketakareṇubhiste sambhāvayatyānanamāyatākṣi |
māmakṣamammaṇḍanakālahāneḥ vettīva bimbādharaḥ baddhatṛṣṇam || 13-16

13-16. {Sita was so amazed at the sight she saw on the ground from the plane that her eyes opened wide. So, Lord Ram addresses her as a 'wide-eyed lady' in this verse.}

Oh wide-eyed lady! The breeze of the ocean is laden by pollen that bears the sweet scent of the Ketaka plant (Pandanus ordorifer)¹, and it rises up from the surface of the land around the ocean to reach high up to touch your lips to tease me that it is doing what I could not do.

[Note--¹The Ketaka plant is botanically known as Pandanus ordorifer. It has strong fragrant leaves, and is generally found in marshy land with a saline soil near seas. By its sweet aroma, it attracts serpents.]

Verse no. 17:

एते वयम्सैकतभिन्नशुक्ति पर्यस्तमुक्तापटलम्पयोधेः।

प्राप्ता मुहूर्तेन विमानवेगात् कूलम्फलावर्जितपूगमालम्॥ १३-१७

ete vayamsaikatabhinnaśukti paryastamuktāpaṭalampayodheḥ |
prāptā muhūrtena vimānavegāt kūlamphalāvarjitapūgamālam || 13-17

13-17. See, due to the speed of the plane we have so quickly arrived on the other shore of the ocean (i.e. the northern coast of the ocean) where the sand is covered by oysters which have opened up to scatter their pearls all around, and the coast is lined by areca catechu palm trees which are bent under the weight of their fruits, the areca nut (also known as the betel nut).

Verse no. 18:

कुरुष्व तावत्करभोरु पश्चात् मार्गे मृगप्रेक्षिणि दृष्टिपातम्।

एषा विदूरीभवतः समुद्रात् सकानना निष्पततीव भूमिः॥ १३-१८

kuruṣva tāvatkarabhoru paścāt mārge mṛgaprekṣiṇi drṣṭipātam |
eṣā vidūrībhavataḥ samudrāt sakānanā niṣpatatīva bhūmiḥ || 13-18

13-18. Oh lady with a deer-gaze and having thighs like the thick stem of the plantain tree! Turn back and see the land below. It is a thickly forested land, and it seems that it has

emerged from the ocean that is fast receding away from us as the plane moves inland and further away from the ocean.

Verse no. 19:

क्वचित्पथा संचरते सुराणाम् क्वचिद्घनानाम्पतताम्क्वचिच्च।

यथाविधो मे मनसोऽभिलाषः प्रवर्तते पश्य तथा विमानम्॥ १३-१९

kvacitpathā saṁcarate surāṇām kvacidghanānāmpatatāmkvacicca |
yathāvidho me manaso'bhilāṣaḥ pravartate paśya tathā vimānam || 13-19

13-19. My dear Sita! This Pushpak plane is very fantastic: it moves in accordance to my wish. Sometimes it follows the path that the gods would use to travel, at other times it cruises through the path of the clouds, and at other times it follows the route used by the birds to go from one place to another (which is sometimes high up in the sky and sometimes nearer to the earth).

[Note--The Pushpak plane was controlled by the mind of its chief rider. It could be turned left or right, and lifted up and lowered down by merely wishing it to do so. Perhaps it was controlled by a sensor that was linked to some kind of device attached to the commander's head that would sense signals emanating from his brain, telling the plane in which direction to move. There were no complicated physical steering mechanisms nor a complicated electronic panel to navigate the plane, neither was there the need for the chief patron to be an expert in technical matters to fly the plane. It was semi self-propelled, and like modern-day satellites that are remote-controlled by signals from the ground, the plane was controlled by the thought-signals emanating from the patron's mind. Perhaps the chief pilot wore some sort of a helmet or other kind of gadget fixed to his head, and this gadget caught signals from the brain that it conveyed to the control panel of the plane by a wireless connection. Surely, science and technology were so advanced in that ancient time that such a plane could actually be built. Though science and technology has made progress by leaps and bounds in our so-called modern world, and of late there is a lot of talk of AI (artificial intelligence)-driven tech, yet this kind of plane is still far away from even being imagined.]

Verse no. 20:

असौ महेन्द्रद्विपदानगन्धि स्त्रिमार्गगावीचिविमर्दशीतः।

आकाशवायुर्दिनयौवनोत्थान् आचामति स्वेदलवान्मुखे ते॥ १३-२०

asau mahendradvipadānagandhi strimārgagāvicivimardaśītaḥ |
ākāśavāyurdinayauvanotthān ācāmati svedalavānmukhe te || 13-20

13-20. {Addressing Sita, Lord Ram continued--} The breeze blowing in the sky-- which is rich with the fragrance of the ichor¹ effusing from the head of Indra's elephant known as Erawat, a fragrance that it has picked up while blowing in the heaven, and at the same time has become cool by wafting over the waves of the celestial river of gods known as the 'Akash Ganga' (literally meaning the holy river Ganges that flows through the heaven; which in modern world refers to the milky-way)--is helping to provide comfort to you by drying up the sweat beads, caused by the heat of the midday, on your face.

[Note—¹The 'ichor' is the fragrant viscous fluid effusing from the sides of the forehead of a mature male elephant during the rutting season. In Hinduism, the ichor of Indra's elephant, known as 'Erawat', represents grandeur, majesty and youthfulness, because this adult and powerful elephant has been anointed to be the mount of Indra, the king of gods, which is a special privilege that no other member of the animal kingdom, let alone an elephant, possesses.

When the breeze blows anywhere, say in a garden, it is natural for it carry the scent of the surrounding areas along with it, which in the case of a garden would be the fragrance of flowers. If the breeze blows over a mango orchard for example, the sweet aroma of ripe mangoes carried by it would make people aware of the presence of such an orchard even in a place far away from the actual location of the mango trees. So therefore, when the breeze blew in the sky it naturally picked up the scent of the ichor emanating from Erawat's head. This fragrance is spread all over in the heavens.

Secondly, it is a common observance that the breeze blowing inland from the sea is always cool as compared to its counterpart blowing in from the heated land during hot summer days. So therefore, the breeze that Lord Ram and Sita experienced aboard the Pushpak plane was cool when it reached them as it had previously wafted over the cool waves of the akash-ganga.]

Verse no. 21:

करेण वातायनलम्बितेन स्पृष्टस्त्वया चण्डि कुतूहलिन्या।

आमुञ्चतीवाभरणमिद्वतीयम् उद्भिन्नविद्युद्वलयो घनस्ते॥ १३-२१

kareṇa vātāyanalambitena sprṣṭastvayā caṇḍi kutūhalinyā |

āmuñcatīvābharanamdvitīyam udbhinnavidyudvalayo ghanaste || 13-21

13-21. My dear Sita! When you extend your hand outside the window of the plane to touch the clouds playfully and out of curiosity, then the bangles around your wrist begin to shine with layers of dazzling light as if the deity of the clouds has come forward to put another bangle around your wrist.

[Note--The plane was moving ahead with great speed. So when Sita put her hands outside the window to feel the soft texture and the coolness of the surrounding clouds, the resultant friction that was caused by the bangles moving speedily through the moist layers of the cloud created electrical charges that produced sparks, which in turn created a

scintillating display of colours. It appeared that the deity of the clouds is putting another ring of shining bracelets on Sita's wrists.]

Verse no. 22:

**अमी जनस्थानमपोढविघ्नम् मत्वा समारब्धनवोटजानि।
अध्यासते चीरभृतो यथास्वम् चिरोज्झितान्याश्रममण्डलानि॥ १३-२२**

amī janasthānamapoḍhavighnam matvā samārabdhanavotajāni |
adhyāsate cīrabhr̥to yathāsvam cirojjhitānyāśramamaṇḍalāni || 13-22

13-22. Look below: you will observe that many ascetics dressed in ochre clothes have erected new hermitages at places that they had abandoned long ago out of Ravana's fear. When the news of the demon's death reached them, they became fearless, and came back to re-establish their hermitages which they had abandoned earlier.

Verse no. 23:

**सैषा स्थली यत्र विचिन्वता त्वाम् भ्रष्टम्मया नूपुरमेकमुर्व्याम्।
अदृश्यत त्वच्चरणारविन्द विश्लेषदुःखादिव बद्धमौनम्॥ १३-२३**

saiṣā sthalī yatra vicinvatā tvām bhraṣṭammayā nūpuramekamurvyām |
adr̥ṣyata tvaccaraṇāravinda viślēṣaduḥkhādiva baddhamaunam || 13-23

13-23. {Pointing out a particular spot on the ground below, Lord Ram told Sita--} See at that spot below: it was here that I found one of your anklet jewels that got loose from your foot and had fallen to the ground (while Ravana was taking you away). While I was searching for you in the wild forest, I found it lying silently in a sad and sombre mood on the ground, as if it too was grieving, like me, at having lost contact with you.

{When I found this piece of jewel, I immediately recognised it to be yours. And it was good in a sense because it proved to me that I was on track and moving in the right direction to search for you.}

Verse no. 24:

**त्वमक्षसा भीरु यतोऽपनीता तम्मार्गमेताः कृपया लता मे।
अदर्शयन्वक्तुमशक्नुवत्यः शाखाभिरावर्जितपल्लवाभिः॥ १३-२४**

tvamrakṣasā bhīru yato'panītā tammārgametāḥ kṛpayā latā me |
adarśayanvaktumaśaknuvatyaḥ śākhābhirāvarjitapallavābhiḥ || 13-24

13-24. You had become very timid and terrified at that time (bhīru) (and probably this anklet jewel got dislodged from your foot due to your shivering while you might have

been fiddling with it nervously). The creepers that lay on the way wished to tell me the direction in which Ravana had taken you away, but unfortunately they couldn't speak. So therefore, to compensate their inability to communicate with me in words, they used gestures by bending themselves and making their leaves sway in the direction that I was expected to proceed in search of you.

Verse no. 25:

**मृग्यश्च दर्भाङ्कुरनिर्व्यपेक्षाः तवागतिर्न्यम्समबोधयन्माम्।
व्यापारयन्त्यो दिशि दक्षिणस्याम् उत्पक्षराजीनि विलोचनानि॥ १३-२५**

mṛgyaśca darbhāṅkuranirvyapekṣāḥ tavāgatijñyamsamabodhayanmām |
vyāpārayantyo diśi dakṣiṇasyām utpakṣarājīni vilocanāni || 13-25

13-25. When female deer observed that I am distraught and unable to find out in which direction you had gone, then they raised their heads, and opening their eyes wide they would look in the south direction so as to indicate to me that you had gone in that direction.

[Note--Beautiful ladies are compared to the doe, and their eyes are often called doe-eyes by poets. The deer would open their eyes wide to remind me of you, and then by looking in the south direction they were literally telling me that 'your doe-eyed Sita has gone that way'.]

Verse no. 26:

**एतद्दिगरेर्माल्यवतः पुरस्तात् आविर्भत्यम्बरलेखि शृङ्गम्।
नवम्पयो यत्र घनैर्मया च त्वद्विप्रयोगाश्रु समम्बिसृष्टम्॥ १३-२६**

etadgirermālyavataḥ purastāt āvirbhatyambaralekhi śṛṅgam |
navampayo yatra ghanairmayā ca tvadviprayogāśru samamvisrṣṭam || 13-26

13-26. Look there at those sky-touching high peaks of the range of mountains called Malyawan. I had spent the rainy season there. When rain fell down from the clouds there, my eyes also began to rain tears in your memory. {To wit, I had wept for you a lot while staying atop the mountains during the rainy season. The Lord is referring to the four months of the rainy season he had spent on the summit of this mountain in Kishkindha before launching the campaign to Lanka to free Sita from Ravana.}¹

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 12. But in Ram Charit Manas, the name of the mountain is Prabarshan, and not Malyawan.]

Verse no. 27:

गन्धश्च धाराहतपल्वलानाम् कादम्बमर्धोद्गतकेसरम्च।

स्निग्धाश्च केकाः शिखिनाम्बभूवुः यस्मिन्नसह्यानि विना त्वया मे॥ १३-२७

gandhaśca dhārāhatapalvalānām kādambamardhodgatakesaramca |
snigdhaśca kekāḥ śikhināmbabhūvuḥ yasminnasahyāni vinā tvayā me || 13-27

13-27. At that time, the pleasing fragrance arising from lakes that had been filled by fresh supply of rain-water, and in which young stems of the freshly sprouting Kadamba flower (the tropical tree called Neolamarckia cadamba; it has fragrant, ball-shaped, orange-yellow flowers; it is also called the Bur-flower tree) were growing in abundance, as well as the enchanting cries of peacocks dancing in the rain--these natural scenes of beauty became unbearable for me as they filled my heart with sadness instead of comforting me.

Verse no. 28:

पूर्वानुभूतस्मरता च यत्र कम्पोत्तरम्भीरु तवोपगूढम्।

गुहाविसारीण्यतिवाहितानि मया कथंचिद्घनगर्जितानि॥ १३-२८

pūrvānubhūtamsmaratā ca yatra kampottarambhīru tavopagūḍham |
guhāvisārīṇyativāhitāni mayā kathamcidghanagarjitāni || 13-28

13-28. Oh timid lady (bhīru)! I remembered those days when upon hearing the thunder and rumbling of the rain-bearing clouds that echoed in the cave where we once used to live during the rainy season, you would feel so terrified that you would cower in fear and grasp me for protection. This memory made me extremely sad when I was alone while spending the days of the rainy season on the summit of Mt. Malayawan.

Verse no. 29:

आसारसिक्तक्षितिबाष्पयोगात् मामक्षिणोद्यत्र विभिन्नकोशैः।

विडम्ब्यमाना नवकन्दलैस्ते विवाहधूमारुणलोचनश्रीः॥ १३-२९

āsārasiktakṣitibāṣpayogāt māmakṣiṇodyatra vibhinnakośaiḥ |
viḍambyamānā navakandalaiṣte vivāhadhūmaruṇalocanaśrīḥ || 13-29

13-29. The continuous rainfall caused warm vapour to rise from the hot surface of the earth. When the Kandali plant (known as Stinging nettle in English) came in contact with this humid environment, its buds opened and assumed a red hue. This reminded me of the time when your (Sita's) eyes had become red due to the irritation caused by the smoke rising from the offerings made to the ritualistic fire that was lit during our marriage ceremony. This memory made was very painful for me, and it made me very sad and distraught.

Verse no. 30:

उपान्तवानीरवनोपगूढानि आलक्ष्यपारिप्लवसारसानि।

दूरावतीर्णा पिबतीव खेदात् अमूनि पम्पासलिलानि दृष्टिः॥ १३-३०

upāntavānīravanopagūḍhāni ālakṣyapāriplavasārasāni |
dūrāvatīrṇā pibatīva khedāt amūni pampāsālilāni dr̥ṣṭiḥ || 13-30

13-30. Look there: the water of the Pampa lake¹ is not clearly visible from the plane because it is surrounded by thickets of tall cane trees, reeds and grass that bend towards its surface in their attempt to drink its water. One has to strain one's eyes to get a glimpse of the lake from our position in the sky.

[Note--¹The Pampa lake was a fresh-water lake that had exceptional natural beauty and was surrounded by a verdant green forest with animals and green trees. Lord Ram and Laxman had gone there while searching for Sita, and they had taken a short rest on its banks. The visit of the Lord to the Pampa lake, as well as its captivating charm has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41. The gods had visited the Lord at this place to pay their respects to him. Sage Narad too came to meet Lord Ram at Pampa lake--refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-11 that precede Doha no. 41.

Sita hadn't accompanied Lord Ram to Pampa lake as Ravana had abducted her from Panchavati that was situated further away, to the north of it. So that is why the Lord pointed it out specially to her, and also because he had spent some time on the lake's banks to rest.

Arrival of the plane above the Pampa lake means that it has crossed the kingdom of Kishkindha and was near the part of the land where Panchavati and other sites were located, and where hermitages of great sages whom the Lord had met on his outward journey too were located.]

Verse no. 31:

अत्रावियुक्तानि रथङ्गनाम्ना मन्योन्यदत्तोत्पलकेसराणि।

द्वन्द्वानि दूरान्तरवर्तिना ते मया प्रिये सस्मितमीक्षितानि॥ १३-३१

atrāviyuktāni rathaṅganāmnā manyonyadattotpalakesarāṇi |
dvandvāni dūrāntaravartinā te mayā priye sasmitamīkṣitāni || 13-31

13-31. My dear (priye)! Here in this Pampa lake I could see pairs of birds known as Chakva-Chakvi (male and female ruddy duck or goose, which are also called waterfowls)¹ who stayed together no matter what happens. I could see the male bird feeding his female partner nectar-laden pollen from the lotus flower. Since I was alone and separated from you, this sight made me sad; I wondered when I would be able to see

a similar day (when you and me would stay close to each other, and I would be able to feed you with my own hands to show my love for you).

[Note--¹The Chakva-Chakvi couple (male and female ruddy duck or the ruddy goose are waterfowls) are regarded as inseparable and a stellar example of love and affection between a male and his female partner. These birds form a strong and lifelong bond, and considered as symbols of marital fidelity in Indian folklore. Their bonding and love for each other is often used as a metaphor or analogy to explain a bond of love between a husband and the wife, or two inseparable lovers.]

Verse no. 32:

**इमाम्तटाशोकलतामच तन्वीम् स्तनाभिरामस्तबकाभिनमाम्।
त्वत्प्राप्तिबुद्ध्या परिरब्धुकामः सौमित्रिणा साश्रुरहमिषिद्धः॥ १३-३२**

imāmtatāśokalātāmca tanvīm stanābhirāmastabakābhinamrām |
tvatprāptibuddhyā parirabdhukāmaḥ saumitriṇā sāśrurahamniṣiddhaḥ || 13-32

13-32. I was grieving so much for you that I had lost control over my mind and behaviour; I behaved almost like a madman. Once (near lake Pampa), when I saw some slender creepers clinging to the branches of the Ashoka tree in order to find support, as they were being weighed down by clusters of flowers growing on them in pairs, I became so overwhelmed that I clung to these creepers and embraced them thinking them to be your arms. At that time, when Laxman observed my madness and disoriented state of mind, he began to weep, and he somehow comforted me and separated me from the creepers.

Verse no. 33:

**अमूर्विमानान्तरलम्बिनीनाम् श्रुत्वा स्वनम्काञ्चनकिङ्किणीनाम्।
प्रत्युद्ब्रजन्तीव खमुत्पतन्त्यो गोदावरीसारसपङ्क्तयस्त्वाम्॥ १३-३३**

Amūrvimānāntaralambinīnām śrutvā svanamkāñcanakīṅkiṇīnām |
pratyudvrajantīva khamutpatantyo godāvarīsārasapaṅktayastvām || 13-33

13-33. Look here, the jingling sound emanating from the golden bells strung in circles and attached to our plane, is attracting rows of Saras birds (the storks) who are roaming around the banks of river Godavari below. Thinking that this sound of the bells represents a large flock of birds of their own kind arriving from the sky, they are rising up in large numbers to meet the visitors, which in turn seems to mean that they are rising up to welcome you to their homes on the ground.

Verse no. 34:

एषा त्वया पेशलमध्ययापि घटाम्बुसंवर्धितबालचूता।

आनन्दयत्युन्मुखकृष्णसारा दृष्टा चिरात्पञ्चवटी मनो मे॥ १३-३४

eṣā tvayā peśalamadhyayāpi ghaṭāmbusamvardhitabālacūtā |
ānandayatyunmukhakṛṣṇasārā dr̥ṣṭā cirātpañcavaṭī mano me || 13-34

13-34. {The plane now arrives at Panchavati.} Seeing Panchavati after such a long time, my heart jumps with joy. Look down there--the antelopes are raising their heads to look up and see our plane. Do you remember--it was here that you had watered mango trees by carrying small pitchers of water yourself by supporting these pitchers on your slender waist (as you found it difficult to carry them in your hands)?

[Note--Sita was a princess and not accustomed to hard manual labour. To water the plants around their hermitage at Panchavati, Sita used to bring small pitchers of water from the nearby water-body. In order to carry the water-filled pitchers she would support them on her waists while walking. The other way to carry them would be on the head or directly in the hand. But Sita found it more convenient to rest the rounded body of the pitcher that fitted in well in the concave or curved hollow of her slim waist. We must not forget that Kalidas was a poet, and being a poet he more often than not used the curvaceous form of the female body to describe the beauty of a scene.]

Verse no. 35:

अत्रानुगोदम्मृगयानिवृत्तः तरंगवातेन विनीतखेदः।

रहस्त्वदुत्सङ्गनिषण्णमूर्धा स्मरामि वानीरगृहेषु सुप्तः॥ १३-३५

atrānugodammṛgayānivr̥ttaḥ taraṅgavātena vinītakhedah |
rahastvadutsaṅganiṣaṇṇamūrdhā smarāmi vānīragṛheṣu suptaḥ || 13-35

13-35. I recall those pleasant days when we were alone in bowers of cane trees, and the cool breeze blowing in from the river Godavari would make me feel drowsy after I returned tired from hunting in the forest. Then I would put my head on your lap to sleep soundly.

Verse no. 36:

भ्रूभेदमात्रेण पदान्मघोनः प्रभंशयाम् यो नहुषमचकार।

तस्याविलाम्भःपरिशुद्धिहेतोः भौमो मुनेः स्थानपरिग्रहोऽयम्॥ १३-३६

bhrūbhedamātreṇa padānmaghonaḥ prabhraṁśayām yo nahuṣamcakāra |
tasyāvilāmbhaḥparišuddhihetoh bhaumo muneḥ sthānaparigraho'yam ||
13-36

13-36. Look there in front. Here is the hermitage of sage Agastya¹ who had such immense spiritual and mystical powers that once he had made king Nahush fall from the status of Indra (i.e. from the status of attaining kingdom of the heaven) by merely knitting his eyebrows to frown and express his annoyance at him².

When the star called Canopus that represent him rises in the sky, then even the turbid waters that accumulate on the ground after rainfall become clear³. {To wit, after the first rains the water forms small dirty puddles on the ground, and even ponds and lakes have dirty water that drains into them from surrounding areas. But as the rainy season progresses, the time comes for this star to rise prominently in the sky, and by this time abundance of rainfall clears the dirtiness of the water of the water-bodies on the earth and they become filled with clean water.}

[Note--¹Lord Ram had met sage Agastya on his outward journey to the forest. It was this sage who had advised Lord Ram to go and stay for sometime at Panchavati on the banks of river Godavari. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12, and (ii) Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line nos. 15-18 that precede it.}

²King Nahush: There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

King Nahush's example is often cited to show how stubbornness, adamancy and an arrogant nature more often than not backfires, and is detrimental to one's own good well-being. It is cited in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas where Lord Ram has used it as an example to try and dissuade Sita to abandon her determination to accompany him to the forest, and instead heed his advice to stay home and serve her mother-in-law (Kaushalya) in deference to his wishes, for if she does not heed him she would get nothing but misery and pain in the bargain. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 61.}

Laxman too cites king Nahush's example to say how arrogance and haughtiness makes a person act wildly without thinking the evilness he is perpetrating. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 228.}

³Canopus is the brightest star in the southern constellation of Carina. It is named Agastya in ancient Indian astronomy. Agastya is said to be the 'cleanser of waters', since by the

time of rising of this star in the month of August, the waters of rivers, lakes and ponds etc. have gradually settled down and have thereby lost their turbidity.]

Verse no. 37:

त्रेताग्निधूमाग्रमनिन्द्यकीर्तेः तस्येदमाक्रान्तविमानमार्गम्।

घ्रात्वा हविर्गन्धि रजोविमुक्तः समश्नुते मे लघिमानमात्मा॥ १३-३७

tretāgnidhūmāgramanindyakīrteḥ tasyedamākrāntavimānamārgam |
ghrātvā havirgandhi rajovimuktaḥ samaśnute me laghimānamātmā || 13-37

13-37. It is the smoke rising up into the sky from the offerings made by the most honourable, revered and renowned sage Agastya in the three kinds of sacred fires (such as Garhyapatya, Dakshinagni and Ahawaniya fires) that he has lit for his fire sacrifice rituals, that I am inhaling now. This smoke containing the essence of the sacrificial offerings is very auspicious and rejuvenating, and by smelling (inhaling, sniffing) it my soul has been purified of all inauspicious thoughts and cleansed of all Raja Gunas (qualities that represent worldly attachments, mundane affairs and lustful desires). I feel very fresh and invigorated.

Verse no. 38:

एतन्मुमुनेर्मानिनि शातकर्णेः पञ्चाप्सरो नाम विहारवारि।

आभाति पर्यन्तवनम्विदूरात् मेघान्तरालक्ष्यमिवेन्दुबिम्बम्॥ १३-३८

etanmumunermānini śātakarṇeḥ pañcāpsaro nāma vihāravāri |
ābhāti paryantavanamvidūrāt meghāntarālakṣyamivendubimbam || 13-38

13-38. Oh honourable lady (mānini)! Further down there is the hermitage of sage known as Shatkarni Rishi. It is represented by the lake called Panchaasar (literally meaning a cluster of five lakes; Panch=five, Sar=lake). It is surrounded on all the sides by dense and dark forests so much so that it is difficult to have a clear view of it from the sky except through some gap in the thick covering of trees, just like the case of it being difficult to see the clear disc of a full moon if it is surrounded by thick banks of dark clouds, except through a random gap in these clouds.

Verse no. 39:

पुरा स दर्भाङ्कुरमात्रवृत्तिः चरन्मृगैः सार्धमृषिर्मघोना।

समाधिभीतेन किलोपनीतः पञ्चाप्सरोयौवनकूटबन्धम्॥ १३-३९

purā sa darbhāṅkuramātravṛttiḥ caranmṛgaiḥ sārddhamṛṣirmaghonā |
samādhibhītena kilopanītaḥ pañcāpsaroyauvanakūṭabandham || 13-39

13-39. {The following two verses, nos. 39-40, briefly narrate the story related to sage Shatkarni.}

In some earlier time, this sage (Shatkarni) used to do severe penance. While doing penances, he would survive by eating only freshly sprouted kush grass like the rest of the deer around him. Seeing him doing such intense penance, Indra (who is always jealous of anyone whom he thinks was eying his heavenly crown), became jealous of the sage, thinking that by doing severe penance and observing strict austerities, the sage wished to accumulate sufficient mystical and spiritual powers to claim his heavenly throne.

Hence, to make the sage fall from his spiritual pursuits, Indra threw a bait in the form of sending five celestial damsels, known as Apsaras, to lure him off his penances and austerities by their lustful overtures and gestures. Unaware of Indra's crooked designs, the innocent sage fell in the trap.

{To wit, Indra sent five voluptuous young damsels who corrupted sage Shatkarni, and all his accumulated spiritual merit became null and void. As a result, the sage lost his spiritual and mystical powers that he had so diligently accumulated over a long time.}

[Note-- The word 'Indra' comes from the word 'Indri', meaning the sense organs of the body that perceive the five senses of touch (skin), smell (nose), taste (tongue), hearing (ears) and sight (eyes). The main idea here is that no matter how rigorously a person may have conducted himself for a long time, as a result of which he had acquired certain abilities and powers, yet if he allows himself to fall prey to the lure of any of these senses, then all his efforts would come undone. The 'five' Apsaras sent by Indra symbolise these 'five' the lure of these five senses as outlined herein above. So therefore, by these mythical stories and metaphors, ancient scriptures try to warn wise people to be careful about their conduct and their dealings with this gross world.]

Verse no. 40:

तस्यायमन्तर्हितसौधभाजः प्रसक्तसंगीतमृदङ्गघोषः।

वियद्गतः पुष्पकचन्द्रशालाः क्षणम्प्रतिश्रुन्मुखराः करोति॥ १३-४०

tasyāyamantarhitasaudhabhājāḥ prasaktasamgītamṛdaṅgaghoṣaḥ |

viyadgataḥ puṣpakacandraśālāḥ kṣaṇampratiśrunmukharāḥ karoti || 13-40

13-40. The sound of music and dance that you hear is originating from the underwater mansion of that sage (Shatkarni, who had been deceived by the five Apsaras sent by Indra to demote him and prevent him from rising higher in his spiritual pursuit and acquiring sufficient mystical powers so as to claim the throne of the heaven).

It is the music of the Mridang (a double-headed, barrel-shaped musical instrument used in Indian classical music) that is emanating from those mansions which reaches the plane and is echoing here.

[Note--Though not explicitly said, the sage's merit that he had accumulated by his austerities and penances could not go in vain inspite of the fact that he had lost his

eligibility to acquire the status of Indra. So, when the Apasaras ensnared him in their lustful net, they also crafted a magical underwater play-houses for him where the sage and these damsels could have a nice time enjoying dance and music away from the glare of the outside world. This trick served an important purpose--it saved the sage from public scorn and humiliation as no one would know who lived in those underwater play-houses, and secondly, since the goings-on in these underwater play-houses were not visible from the surface, nor was there any way to learn about the identity of the occupants inside them, it saved the wider community of sages and ascetics from acquiring a general bad name and reputation due to the misadventure and misdemeanour of a single sage, which would have been a very tragic development.]

Verse no. 41:

हविर्भुजामेधवतामचतुर्णाम् मध्ये ललाटंतपसप्तसप्तिः।

असौ तपस्यत्यपरस्तपस्वी नाम्ना सुतीक्ष्णश्चरितेन दान्तः॥ १३-४१

havirbhujāmedhavatāmcaturnām madhye lalāṭantapasaptasaptiḥ |
asau tapasyatyaparastapasvī nāmnā sutīkṣṇaścaritena dāntaḥ || 13-41

13-41. As the plane moved ahead, it came over the hermitage of sage Sutikshan¹. Lord Ram told Sita: "See there. The sage sitting amidst the lighted sacrificial fire of four kinds, into which offerings have already been made, is sage Sutikshan. His forehead glows with the radiance of the midday sun, and his penances and austerities have caused a brilliant halo around him. This gives the impression that he is the fifth sacred fire in the middle of the other four sacred fire to complete the picture².

This sage is unique in that though he has such stupendous spiritual powers that he glows like the sun itself, yet he is very calm, cool and comforting unlike the scorching sun.

[Note--¹Lord Ram had met sage Sutikshan prior to meeting sage Agastya on his outward journey to the forest--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 10.

²There are five sacred fires according to the Upanishads and ancient scriptures. These five fires are the following:

According to the *Chandogya Upanishad* of Sam Veda tradition, Canto 4, sections 10 to 13, the five formal divine sacred fires are the following—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’ (the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end), (c) ‘Ahawaniya’ (the fire lit to invoke the Gods, to invite them to participate and accept the offerings made to them during a ritualistic fire sacrifice), (d) ‘Sabhya’ (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit), and (e) ‘Awasathya’ (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the

three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 2, section 24, while Canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The *Garhyapatya fire*—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these four entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The fire was the central piece of all religious life in early times of the Vedic period when a fire sacrifice was deemed to be the best religious activity that a righteous man can expect to do. In this context, the Garhyapatya fire is the main fire lit during such formal fire sacrifices. The fire pit was either square-shaped or rounded. In the context of the fire sacrifice, it was used for the purpose of daily rituals, cooking or warming the offerings, heating of the vessels, to perform circumambulation, to act as a main cauldron or reservoir of the sacred fire which was to be kept perpetually burning throughout the life of the householder once it was lit.

The *Dakshinagni fire*—This fire is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

Like in the case of the Garhyapatya fire, the fire that was lit in the main sacrificial shed or site just near the main fire pit but to the south of it and where donations and charities were made was called Dakshinagni fire. The fire pit for this fire was semi-circular or bow-shaped.

The *Ahawaniya fire*—This fire is lit to invoke the Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possesses most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

According to Vedic tradition, the invitational fire, the Ahawaniya fire that is lit to invite or invoke the Gods, is started from a spark brought from the Garhyapatya fire of the patron who does the fire sacrifice or on whose behalf it is being done. If such a fire is not available with him, then it is brought from some other person's house who worships the

sacred fire on a daily basis. The Dakshinagni is then lit to bear witness to the charities made during the fire sacrifice.

The following are also regarded as the five fires— (i) The Sun, (ii) The Lightning, (iii) The Terrestrial fire, (iv) The Master or Lord of the household, and (v) The Chief Priest.

Scriptures ordain that a learned person should worship the fire element by doing five types of sacrifices in his life. These are called the *Panch Maha Yagya* (the five great religious sacrifices). They are the following—(1) Bhut Yagya refers to taking care of other creatures in creation, such as feeding animals and providing for their protection and shelter. (2) Manushya Yagya refers to doing the same thing for fellow human beings as done for animals and other creatures of this creation. (3) Pitri Yagya refers to offering oblations to dead ancestors and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls. (4) Dev Yagya refers to the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them. (5) And Brahm Yagya refers to the study of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm. These five sacrifices have been described in *Ashramo-panishad*, verse no. 3.

According to the *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12, the five holy fires are the following—Pran, Ahawaniya, Dakshinagni, Garhapatya, and Sarwa-Praaschitya¹ fires. To quote this Upanishad—“Then the five sacred fires are offered oblations by silently¹ remembering the five Mantras meant for the five types of vital winds, one by one. [This is an important verse because it establishes the link between the five types of Prans, the vital winds, and the five sacred fires.]

So, the first oblation is offered to the first fire represented by the main vital wind called Pran² (breath) by mutely humming the first Mantra (meant for the Pran wind—OM Pranaye Swaha). [Pran is considered as a fire because it is the breath that keeps the body of the creature warm and alive. As soon as one stops to breathe, the body dies.]

The second oblation is offered to the second fire called ‘Ahawaniya³’ by mutely humming the second Mantra (meant for the Apan wind—OM Apanaye Swaha).

The third oblation is offered to the third fire called ‘Dakshinagni⁴’ by mutely humming the third Mantra (meant for the Vyan wind—OM Vyanaye Swaha).

The fourth oblation is offered to the fourth fire called ‘Garhapatya⁵’ by mutely saying the fourth Mantra (meant for the Udaan wind—OM Udanaye Swaha).

The fifth and final oblation is offered to the fifth fire called ‘Sarwa-Praaschitya⁶’ by mutely saying the fifth Mantra (meant for the Samaan wind—OM Samanaye Swaha). [The Praaschitya fire is the one that is lit as a witness to one’s penance, repentance and expiation.] (12).

[Note—¹The Mantras are said in a silent manner or mutely hummed as the worshipper is honouring these sacred fires present symbolically in his own body and not outside in the fire pit of the formal fire sacrifice. These internal fires are symbolically kept burning by the means of the five vital winds which are present inside the body. The Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, also asserts that the body of the living organism is called ‘Deha’ or body *because* it harbours the Fire element in it. The body is like the ‘fire pit’ of a formal fire sacrifice, and the Lord that is worshipped by offering oblations to this fire pit would then obviously be the Atma residing inside this body. This Atma is Brahm personified at the micro level of creation.

The Agni Vidya pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life necessitates the unavoidable presence of energy, heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. No life on earth is tenable and even imaginable without the involvement of the quintessential fire element. The divine fires have been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in Kathvalli or Kathopanishad, 1/1/1-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda. They have also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13 of Sam Veda tradition.

The five holy fires mentioned in this Upanishad are the following—(i) ²*Pran* or breath. This is considered as the ‘fire’ from the practical point of view also as it is to be observed that any fire can be ignited and kept burning only if there is an adequate amount of fresh air; otherwise it would be extinguished and life that depends upon air is suffocated to extinction. It is to be remembered that it is the breath that pumps in air in the body, and if a man is not able to breathe then all the other winds would automatically lose their importance and relevance because no life is sustainable and tenable without fresh air which is here referred to as the ‘Pran’, and therefore death would ensue. So, the breath, the Pran wind, is the most important aspect of life, and as such is a metaphor for ‘fire’ inasmuch as it keeps the body alive, energised, charged and ventilated besides keeping it well oxidised and detoxified. (ii) ³*Ahawaniya* is the fire lit to invoke the Gods and invite them to come and accept the offerings during a ritualistic sacrifice. (iii) ⁴*Dakshinagni* is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end. (iv) ⁵*Garhyapatya* is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies. And (v) ⁶*Sarwa-praschitya* Agni—which is the fire standing as a witness to one doing penitence, atonement, expiation and amends for his past errors, misdeeds and sins. This is symbolic way of burning all past sins along with their results, and thereby becoming purified and cleansed.]

Verse no. 42:

अमुम्सहासप्रहितेक्षणानि व्याजार्धसंदर्शितमेखलानि।

नालम्बिकर्तुमजनितेन्द्रशङ्कम् सुराङ्गनाविभ्रमचेष्टितानि॥ १३-४२

amumsahāsaprahitekṣaṇāni vyājārdhasaṁdarśitamēkhalāni |

nālamvikartumjanitendrasaṅkam surāṅganāvibhramaceṣṭitāni || 13-42

13-42. The graceful flirting movements of the celestial maidens sent by Indra, aimed at defiling sage Sutikshan’s austerity and penance - wherein their sidelong glances were darting towards the sage in a mischievous manner, accompanied by provocative and enticing smiles, and their girdles (i.e. the hip and lower waist-line below the belly-button or navel) were purposely exposed partially under some pretext or the other so as to arouse passion in the mind of the sage - were futile as they failed to trap sage Sutikshan who had, due to his practicing strict self-discipline and doing severe penance, had aroused a

sense of anxiety, uncertainty and uneasiness in the mind of Indra who thought that the sage was eying his heavenly throne¹. [13-42]

[Note—¹As we have read earlier in verse nos. 38-39 herein above, Indra tried his dirty tricks on sage Sutikshan too. He sent Apasaras to entice the sage so that he falls down from his exalted stature. But unlike sage Shatkarni, sage Sutikshan remained steadfast in his pursuit, and like the blazing midday sun that removes darkness instead of itself falling prey to darkness, the dark designs of these Apasaras failed to darken the sage's heart.

Indra has been infamous for his suspicion and jealousy towards great sages who did penance and sacrifices as he feared that they would use their spiritual powers to snatch his authority as the ruler of heaven. This envy prompted Indra to create some or the other kind of nonsense to disturb the sage and create hurdles in his austerity and penance. He would try all kinds of tricks to break the sage's vow of self-control over senses and passions. He would usually employ his nymphs or young damsels of the heaven's court to go and lure the sage into a honey-trap with their antics and sexually arousing posturing so that the sage breaks his vows of self-discipline and austerity, and falls prey to passions and lust.

More often than not, Indra failed in this nefarious design, and the brunt of the sage's anger was borne first by the poor ladies because the annoyed sage would cast his wrath on them, making them suffer, and when he realised that the main culprit was Indra then the sage would curse Indra too. Thereafter, Indra would plead with Brahma, the grandfather of creation, and other senior gods to intercede on his behalf to seek forgiveness and redemption. Since sages normally had a magnanimous and kind heart, they would usually remit the curse's effect and give some kind of relief.]

Verse no. 43:

एषोऽक्षमालावलयम्मृगाणाम् कण्डूयितारम्कुशसूचिलावम्।

सभाजने मे भुजमूर्ध्वबाहुः सव्येतरम्प्राध्वमितः प्रयुङ्क्ते॥ १३-४३

eṣo'kṣamālāvalayammṛgāṇām kaṇḍūyitāramkuśasūcilāvam |

sabhājane me bhujamūrdhvaḥ savyetaramprādhvmitaḥ prayuṅkte || 13-43

13-43. See, the sage (Sutikshan) is welcoming me by raising his right hand wrapped in a rosary of Rudraksha¹ beads. Since his hand is covered with this rosary which has ragged beads, he can rub the sides of antelopes with it to ease their itchy skin. He also uses his right hand to pluck and prune the kusha grass² for his rituals.

[Note--¹The Rudraksha beads are regarded as very auspicious and symbolise renunciation; they are very favourite of Lord Shiva as well as all ascetics. This bead is the dried seed of the plant *Elaeocarpus ganitrus*, also known as the blueberry tree. It has the word 'rudra' in it, and this word refers to Lord Shiva, and the word 'aksha' which means eye or tears. {Refer—*Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 7, verse no. 8.}

It is believed to have originated from the tears of Lord Shiva. It is said to enhance positive energy, ward off evil, help in spiritual growth, and promote good luck, health and prosperity.

The great spiritual importance and metaphysical significance of the Rudraksha beads have been explained in the *Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad* of the Sam Veda tradition, the *Kalagni Rudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and the *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 7, verse no. 8 of the Atharva Veda tradition.

In the *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 2, Lord Shiva preached sage Jabal Bhusund that a true Brahmin should wear a white Rudraksha bead after taking his morning bath and saying the Rudra Sukta as prayer. It prescribes the number of beads that should be worn on the body as follows—“The worshipper should wear white Rudraksha beads. Forty such beads should be worn on the head in the form of a girdle. On the Shikha (the tuft of hair on the top of the skull), there should be one or three beads. Twelve beads are worn on the ears. Thirty-two beads are worn around the neck as a necklace. Sixteen beads are worn on the upper part (biceps) of each hand. Similarly, twelve beads are worn on each wrist. Six beads are worn on the thumbs (2).’

Origin of Rudraksha—There are two versions regarding the origin of Rudraksha seeds. According to the *Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad* of Sam Veda, verse no. 2, they were produced as tear drops when Lord Rudra had closed his eyes to meditate before slaying the demon Tripurasur. According to another version given in the *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Brahman 7, verse no. 8, at the time of doomsday, Lord Rudra had closed his eyes after having annihilated this creation. This is also why it is called ‘Rudraksha’—something that makes one weep, something that has been born from the eyes of Rudra who had mercilessly concluded this creation. Perhaps he had closed his eyes to cool them down, or perhaps he was overwhelmed by the destruction and ruin that unfolded before his eyes that made him wince with regret. Tears must have rolled down from these eyes, and these formed the seeds called the Rudraksha beads. Shiva is an eternally merciful Lord so he must have invariably felt immense regret at having had to carry out this nasty job of burning down everything during the doomsday. But the Lord was duty-bound to do so as a part of the cosmic cycle of destruction and construction mandated by none other than the Supreme Being himself, and Shiva is none other than the latter. In other words, it is Shiva himself who had laid down the laws of creation and conclusion, and so he must adhere to these cosmic laws in order to maintain their sanctity. When the evil and vices in this world go beyond limits, the Lord assumes the ferocious form of Rudra to clean the slate and begin afresh so that those noble and auspicious souls who were about to be crushed by the ascendant evil could be given a chance for living a new life free from fear.

How to wear Rudraksha—This has been described in (i) Sam Veda’s *Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad*, verse nos. 17-23. (ii) Atharva Veda’s *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 7, verse no. 8; *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph no. 2.

²The Kusha grass: It is also known as Durba. Its botanical name is *poa cynosuroides*, and it is a dark green reed used during religious ceremonies and observances.]

वाचंयमत्वात्प्रणतिम्ममैष कम्पेन किञ्चित्प्रतिगृह्य मूर्ध्नः।
दृष्टिंविमानव्यवधानमुक्ताम् पुनः सहस्रार्चिषि संनिधत्ते॥ १३-४४

vācaṁyamātvātpṛaṇatimamaiṣa kampena kiñcitpratigṛhya mūrdhnaḥ |
dṛṣṭimvimānavyavadhānamuktām punaḥ sahasrārciṣi saṁnidhatte || 13-44

13-44. {Lord Ram explained to Sita--} This sage observes strict silence, and was deeply engaged in meditation during which he was looking up at the sun (with his closed eyes). So when our plane passed over his hermitage and blocked the sunlight for some moments, the sage wondered at the cause of this sudden blockage of sunlight. To find out the cause, he opened his eyes and then saw my plane in the sky. After he recognised me, he waved his right hand to welcome me, and I reciprocated by bowing before him to pay my respects to him, at which he nodded acknowledgement (with a polite smile).

Now, as our plane has moved ahead and the view of the sun has cleared, he has once again focused his (closed) eyes on the sun.

[Note--It is not practical to look at the blazing disc of the sun with an open eye; it would blind the man. So what actually the sage was doing was that he closed his eyelids and turned his head to face the sun directly overhead. The bright disc of the sun when looked through the closed eyelids appeared like a film of bright orange light covering the eye.]

Verse no. 45:

अदः शरण्यमशरभङ्गनाम्नः तपोवनम्पावनमाहिताग्नेः।
चिराय संतर्प्य समिद्धिरग्निं यो मन्त्रपूतामन्तनुमप्यहौषीत्॥ १३-४५

adaḥ śaraṇyamśarabhaṅganāmnāḥ tapovanampāvanamāhitāgneḥ |
cirāya saṁtarpya samidbhiragnim yo mantrapūtāmtanumapyahauṣit || 13-45

13-45. There in the front is the holy hermitage of sage Sarbhanga¹. He was renowned as a sage who would grant protection to those who came to seek refuge with him. He performed fire sacrifices with devotion and diligence. Having satisfied the fire-god by his offerings and purifying himself with Mantras (spiritual formulas), he had finally made the ultimate sacrifice by offering his own body as an offering to the burning sacrificial fire to attain eternal freedom for his soul and deliverance from this mortal and gross world of transmigration.

[Note--¹Lord Ram's meeting with this exalted sage Sarbhanga, and the sage attaining eternal deliverance and salvation for his soul by burning his mortal body in a sacred fire with Lord Ram standing witness has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7-to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9.]

Verse no. 46:

छायाविनीताध्वपरिश्रमेषु भूयिष्ठसंभाव्यफलेष्वमीषु।
तस्यातिथीनामधुनासपर्या स्थिता सुपुत्रेष्विव पादपेषु॥ १३-४६

chāyāvinītādhvapariśrameṣu bhūyiṣṭhasāmbhāvyaphaleṣvamīṣu |
tasyātithīnāmadhunāsaparyā sthitā suputreṣviva pādapeṣu || 13-46

13-46. Just like loyal and faithful sons carry forward the legacy of service for which their father was renowned, so do these large fruit-bearing trees in sage Sarbhanga's hermitage carry on the legacy of service of the legendary sage by providing shade and ripe sweet fruits to travellers who come to take rest under their bowers.

[Note--The trees in the sage's hermitage are likened to faithful sons of a man who had been serving guests all his life. After his death, his sons carry forward their father's legacy by providing service and refreshment to guests and travellers who pass by their home. After the sage passed away, his hermitage did not come to ruin, but it remained lively, green, and flourished with the passage of time. It was due to the sage's spiritual blessings and the a subtle presence of his spirit that helped the hermitage to thrive. It is also possible that some other holy sage or one of the sage's own disciples came to live there to keep his memory and legacy alive. They watered the trees and kept the surroundings clean and vibrant to invite travellers who would like to take rest and seek refreshment.]

Verse no. 47:

धारास्वनोद्गारिदरीमुखोऽसौ शृङ्गाङ्गलग्नम्बुजवप्रपङ्कः।
बध्नाति मे बन्धुरगात्रि चक्षुः दृप्तः ककुद्मनिव चित्रकूटः॥ १३-४७

dhārāsvanodgāridarīmukho'sau śṛṅgāṅgalagnāmbujavaprapaṅkaḥ |
badhnāti me bandhuragātri cakṣuḥ drptaḥ kakudmāniva citrakūṭaḥ || 13-47

13-47. Oh Sita with a beautiful form (bandhuragātri)! There we can see the mountains of Chitrakoot¹. Like a proud bull, it is very robust and attractive with its magnificent natural charm. Its (Chitrakoot's) caves are like the mouth of the bull, the gurgling sound, sometimes of a low pitch and at other times loud, of the many streams cascading down its slopes are like the guttural sound or the loud bellowing of that symbolic bull, its summits and high peaks are the horns of that bull, and the dark clouds that cover the summits of the hills of Chitrakoot are like the dust that has been dug up by this bull while it was digging earth using its horns or while rubbing his horns against the sides of the mountains and hills in a playful mood.

[Note--¹After leaving Ayodhya, it was at Chitrakoot where Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman first put up their hermitage. It was sage Valmiki who had advised the Lord to stay at Chitrakoot. The sage had also briefly described the beauty of the hills of Chitrakoot. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no.

132-to Doha no. 133. The glory of Chitrakoot has been described in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137-to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.]
Verse no. 48:

एषा प्रसन्नस्तिमितप्रवाहा सरिद्विदूरान्तरभावतन्वी।

मन्दाकिनी भाति नगोपकण्ठे मुक्तावली कण्ठगतेव भूमेः॥ १३-४८

eṣā prasannastimitapravāhā saridvidūrāntarabhāvatanvī |
mandākinī bhāti nagopakāṇṭhe muktāvalī kaṇṭhagateva bhūmeḥ || 13-48

13-48. Come, look below. There is the distance is the magnificent river known as Mankakini¹. Its water is very crystal-clean and flows ever so gently. From a distance up above here, this river looks like a thin ribbon of clean water that forms a girdle around the mountains of Chitrakoot, as if a mother Earth is adorned by a beautiful garland of pearls that has been put around her neck.

[Note--¹Chitrakoot is established on the banks of river Mandakini, and this river is said to be a stream originating from the holy river Ganges, or a tributary of Ganges. It was brought as a stream of the holy river Ganges by Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri, by the powers of her Tapa (penance and austerity) so that sage Atri and other great sages could have the same benefit of living near the holy river Ganges flowing close by their hermitages at Chitrakoot as they would have got if they had their hermitages situated far away at some place near the natural course of river Ganges. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 132.

Refer also to verse no. 51 herein below which also reiterates this fact that river Mandakini was brought to Chitrakoot by Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri.

The story of how river Mandakini came to Chitrakoot briefly is as follows:

Once upon a time there was a severe drought, leading to famine and mass sufferings. Sage Atri felt very sad at this development, and moved by the plight of the world he decided to do Tapa (penance and austerity) in order to alleviate the suffering of all the creatures. In this state, the sage entered into a trance, known as Samadhi, and remained unmoving. His wife Anusuiya was constantly by his side to serve him and take care of him as best as she could. She discarded all food and drink just like her husband had done as he entered into the trance-like state during Tapa.

Highly impressed by the noble cause for which the couple were enduring such hardships and doing Tapa, the Gods, great Sages and the holy river Ganges came to visit them and see their pious efforts. While everyone else paid their obeisance and went their ways, Ganges and Lord Shiva stayed back. The deity representing river Gangs was especially very impressed by Anusuiya's pious nature, noble heart and her devotion to her husband sage Atri, and so the deity thought to herself that if she could in some way help this pious and holy lady it would be a very good deed that she (river Ganges) would be doing.

After a long period of 54 years, sage Atri woke up from his meditative state (i.e. from Samadhi), and asked his wife, Anusuiya, to give him some water to drink. Anusuiya

took the sage's water-pot and went out in search of water, wondering from where to fetch some water for the sage. {Remember: there was a prolonged drought.}

The deity of river Ganges decided that it was the most appropriate time to help Anusuiya. So, she revealed herself in a physical form before the hermitess and told her that she (Ganges) was very please by her penances and austerities, and wished to know how she could be helped. Anusuiya asked for some water, at which the personified form of the deity of river Ganges asked the hermitess to dig a small pit in the ground. When it was done, the deity entered it, and transformed herself into water.

Anusuiya filled her pot with that water and requested the deity to remain there till she goes and gives the water to sage Atri, and then bring him to that place. When sage Atri drank this water, he was astonished by its nectarine qualities, sweet, cool and rejuvenating. When asked, Anusuiya told Atri everything. The sage then came to visit the sacred spot where the holy river Ganges had revealed herself.

Seeing the hole from where Anusuiya had fetched water for him, sage Atri recognized it was river Ganges; he paid his obeisance to the holy river and asked the latter not to leave that place, and stay there forever. River Ganges replied that if the sage would offer the good effects of his doing worship of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati (Shiva's consort) for merely one year to river Ganges in exchange of her living there, she would oblige him. The sage agreed. And in this way, river Ganges came to be present in that spot for all times to come, and became known as 'Mandakini'. This episode also shows the stupendous spiritual rewards one gets by worshipping Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati in as much as merely one year's rewards compelled river Ganges to stay put and entitled her to purify a place which had never seen water before. {This story is narrated in Shiva Puran, Canto 4, in its Rudra Sanhita.}]

Verse no. 49:

अयम्सुजातोऽनुगिराम्तमालः प्रवालमादाय सुगन्धि यस्य।

यवाङ्कुरापाण्डुकपोलशोभी मयावतंसः परिकल्पितस्ते॥ १३-४९

ayamsujāto'nugiramtamālaḥ pravālamādāya sugandhi yasya |
yavāṅkurāpāṇḍukapolaśobhī mayāvataṁsaḥ parikalpitaste || 13-49

13-49. That tree called Tamal (an evergreen tree known as Indian Bay leaf tree, or Cinnamomum tamala tree; its leaves are also called Tejpatta) that you descry near the main summit of Chitrakoot is the one whose leaves I would pluck and craft it into an earring which I would then put around your ears. When it dangled on the glowing skin of your cheeks and the sides of your neck, its olive-green colour with some brownish spots looked very radiant and charming as if new sprouts of barley are seen against the backdrop of evergreen verdant fields.

Verse no. 50:

अनिग्रहत्रासविनीतसत्त्व मपुष्पलिङ्गात्फलबन्धिवृक्षम्।
वनमृतपःसाधनमेतदत्रेः आविष्कृतोदग्रतरप्रभावम्॥ १३-५०

anigrahatrāsavinītasattva mapuṣṣpaliṅgātphalabandhivṛkṣam |
vanamtapahṣādhanametadatreh āviṣkṛtodagrataraprabhāvam || 13-50

13-50. There in front is the holy hermitage of sage Atri¹. Even lions and other naturally violent animals have become tamed and calm without use of any force; these animals roam around peacefully without harming or hurting anyone. This hermitage is so blessed that the trees bear fruits without waiting for the formal botanical process of first having flowers and then bearing fruits. {To wit, fruits are available round the year irrespective of the season or month of the year. This is possible because of the great spiritual powers of sage Atri.}

[Note--¹Lord Ram visited sage Atri, and his wife Anusuiya had blessed Sita, during the Lord's outbound journey to the forest--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3-to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

Verse no. 51:

अत्राभिषेकाय तपोधनानाम् सप्तर्षिहस्तोद्धृतहेमपद्माम्।
प्रवर्तयामास किलानसूया त्रिस्रोतसम्त्र्यम्बकमौलिमालाम्॥ १३-५१

atrābhiṣekāya tapodhanānām saptarṣihastoddhṛtahemapadmām |
pravartayāmāsa kilānasūyā trisrotasamtryambakamaulimālām || 13-51

13-51. Sage Atri's wife Anusuyia has brought the holy river Ganges that is so majestic that it traverses by three paths (and hence called 'Tri-path Gamini', i.e. one that flows by three channels)¹. She brought it here in the form of a single stream (known as Mandakini) so that the sage himself as well as other great sages living nearby could bathe in its holy and purifying waters. The seven celestial sages, known as the 'sapta-rishis'², themselves pluck golden-coloured lotus flowers from this river (i.e. river Ganges and its branch Mandakini) to be offered to Lord Shiva. The river itself adorns the head of Lord Shiva like a garland because it wraps itself around his the thick crown of matted hairs that the Lord wears on his head.

[Note--¹River Ganges is called 'Tri-path Gamini', i.e. the river flowing through three channels or paths--heaven (known as Akash Ganga), earth (known as Bhu-Ganga), and subterranean path (known as Patal Ganga).

Briefly, the story of river flowing through three paths or channels is as follows: Originally it flowed in the heaven. Then king Bhagirath brought it down to earth to perform the last rites of his ancestors. And finally, Bhagirath led it to the netherworld or the subterranean world to liberate the souls of the 60,000 sons of king Sagar who lay buried there.

²The Sapta Rishis or the seven sages had exceptional spiritual powers, more than any other sage of the time. They are the following—Kashyap, Atri, Jamdagni, Vishwamitra, Vasistha, Bharadwaj and Gautam.]

Verse no. 52:

वीरासनैर्ध्यानजुषामृषीणाम् अमी समध्यासितवेदिमध्याः।

निवातनिष्कम्पतया विभान्ति योगाधिरूढा इव शाखिनोऽपि॥ १३-५२

vīrāsanairdhyānajuṣāmṛṣīṇām amī samadhyāsitaavedimadhyāḥ |
nivātaniṣkampatayā vibhānti yogādhirūḍhā iva śākhino'pi || 13-52

13-52. In this holy hermitage, there are a number of raised platforms under the shade of trees. On these platforms, ascetics and sages do meditation by sitting motionless. Even the surrounding trees stand still in the absence of a breeze as if they too are meditating. In brief, the whole environment of this place is infused with a spiritual aura or atmosphere of piety where every entity, be it a sage or ascetic, a tree or even the surrounding air, seems motionless as if engrossed in deep meditation. {Its a quiet and calm place, with no noise and disturbance of any kind. Such an environment is crucial for meditation.}

Verse no. 53:

त्वया पुरस्तादुपयाचितो यः सोऽयम्वटः श्याम इति प्रतीतः।

राशिर्मणीनामिव गारुडानाम् सपद्मरागः फलितो विभाति॥ १३-५३

tvayā purastādupayācito yaḥ so'yamvataḥ śyāma iti pratītaḥ |
rāśirmanīnāmiva gāruḍānām sapadmarāgaḥ phalito vibhāti || 13-53

13-53. That dark coloured Vat-Tree (i.e. banyan tree), known as the 'Shyam-tree' because of its dark colour, is the one where you had made a wish¹. With its dark body and red-coloured fruits it gives the impression that many rubies are scattered at random on a heap of emeralds².

[Note--¹During the outbound journey to the forest, Sita had made a wish near this wish-fulfilling tree. She had sought a blessing from it that they, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, could complete their forest exile successfully and come back home safely.

²In this analogy, the dark Vat-tree is likened to a heap of emeralds, and its red-coloured fruits to rubies that are scattered in that heap. We must remember that presently Lord Ram is looking down on this Vat-tree from high above while cruising in the air-plane. So therefore, the tree appears as a large heap of some dark emeralds, with its fruits as red coloured rubies mixed randomly in that heap.]

Verse nos. 54-57:

{In the following verse nos. 54-57, the poet describes the confluence of river Ganga and river Yamuna--i.e. the holy site called Prayag which the Lord visited enroute to the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 105-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 106.}

क्वचित्प्रभालेपिभिरिन्द्रनीलैः मुक्तामयी यष्टिरिवानुविद्धा।

अन्यत्र माला सितपङ्कजानाम् इन्दीवरैरुत्खचितान्तरेव॥ १३-५४

क्वचित्खगानाम्प्रियमानसानाम् कादम्बसंसर्गवतीव पङ्क्तिः।

अन्यत्र कालागुरुदतापत्रा भक्तिर्भुवश्चन्दनकल्पितेव॥ १३-५५

क्वचित्प्रभा चान्द्रमसी तमोभिश्छायाविलीनैः शबलीकृतेव।

अन्यत्र शुभा शरदभलेखा रन्ध्रेष्विवालक्ष्यनभःप्रदेशा॥ १३-५६

क्वचिच्च कृष्णोरगभूषणेव भस्माङ्गरागा तनुरीश्वरस्य।

पश्यानवद्याङ्गि विभाति गङ्गा भिन्नप्रवाहा यमुनातरङ्गैः॥ १३-५७

kvacitprabhālepiibhirindranīlaiḥ muktāmayī yaṣṭirivānuviddhā |
anyatra mālā sitapaṅkajānām indīvarairutkhacitāntareva || 13-54

kvacitkhagānāmpriyamānasānām kādambasaṁsargavatīva paṅktiḥ |
anyatra kālāgurudatāpatrā bhaktirbhuvaścandanakalpiteva || 13-55

kvacitprabhā cāndramasī tamobhiśchāyāvilīnaiḥ śabalīkr̥teva |
anyatra śubhrā śaradabhralekhā randhreṣvivālakṣyanabhaḥpradeśā || 13-56

kvacicca kṛṣṇoragabhūṣaṇeva bhasmāṅgarāgā tanurīśvarasya |
paśyānavadyāṅgi vibhāti gaṅgā bhinnapravāhā yamunātaraṅgaiḥ || 13-57

13-54, 55, 56, 57. Oh Sita! Mark, how beautiful is the scene where the dark coloured water of river Yamuna meets the waves of whitish foaming waters of river Ganges. They present a fascinating sight when beheld together.

Sometimes it looks like as if they are like a necklace threaded together by using pearls and emeralds (representing Ganges and Yamuna respectively), and at other times they look like a garland made by a combination of light blue and dark blue (i.e. grey and pink) coloured lotus flowers (Ganges and Yamuna respectively).

At some places they appear like a flock of swans with dark wings (Yamuna), and at other places these swans assume a whitish colour (Ganges), and at some other places it appears that these two types of swans are flying together (i.e. at places where the waters of the two rivers mix with each other to flow together).

At some places it looks as if white sandal paste (representing Ganges) has been used to decorate the earth, and paste of black aloe (representing Yamuna) has been used to make floral designs on its surface to enhance its beauty.

At some spots it looks like the smooth moonlight (representing Ganges) covering the surface of the earth has been interrupted at places by the dark shadows of trees and their leaves (representing Yamuna) that create dark patches here and there.

At other spots it appears like a streak of white clouds of autumn (representing Ganges) through which the stark colour of the azure blue sky (representing Yamuna) is visible due to some gap in the clouds.

While at some other places it appears as if the body of Lord Shiva has been smeared with white ash (representing Ganges), and decorated by black serpents that are wrapped around it (representing Yamuna).

In this way, the communion of Ganges with Yamuna presents a very fascinating and charming view.

Verse no. 58:

समुद्रपत्योर्जलसंनिपाते पूतात्मनामत्र किलाभिषेकात्।

तत्त्वावबोधेन विनापि भूयः तनुत्यजाम्नास्ति शरीरबन्धः॥ १३-५८

samudrapatyorjalasānīpāte pūtātmanāmatra kilābhiṣekāt |

tattvāvabodhena vināpi bhūyaḥ tanutyajāmnāsti śarīrabandhaḥ || 13-58

13-58. Those who take a holy bath in this confluence of the two holy rivers Ganges and Yamuna find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration in this mortal gross world, even though they may not have had any spiritual knowledge or done any penance or austerity worth the name that are otherwise a necessary criterion for attaining emancipation and salvation of the soul.

{To wit, even an ordinary person who may not have any great knowledge of metaphysics and spiritualism, who has not done Tapa (penance, austerity), Dhyan (meditation), Yagya (sacrifices), Daan (charities), Tirtha (pilgrimage) or other such spiritual practices, can easily attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his or her soul by taking a bath in the confluence of these two holy rivers at Prayag. All their wishes are fulfilled, and all their cherished dreams are realised this easy way. The glories of this place where the two holy rivers meet are beyond imagination. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 105 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}

Verse no. 59:

पुरम्लिषादाधिपतेरिदमन्तत् यस्मिन्मया मौलिमणिम्विहाय।

जटासु बद्धास्वरुदत्सुमन्त्रः कैकेयि कामाः फलितास्तवेति॥ १३-५९

puramniṣādādhīpateridamtat yasminmayā maulimaṇimvihāya |
jaṭāsu baddhāsvarudatsumantraḥ kaikeyi kāmāḥ phalitāstaveti || 13-59

13-59. There in the yonder is the city of Sringeripur, the capital of Nishad, the head of the boatmen community¹. It is the place where I had discarded my princely crown and replaced it by a crown of matted hairs by knitting my long hairs together into a thick plait and wrapping it over my head like done by ascetics. Our royal charioteer Sumantra had wept bitterly when he watched me doing so².

[Note--¹Lord Ram had met Nishadraj at Sringeripur. Nishad had warmly welcomed the Lord, and a bond of friendship was forged immediately between them as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87-to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Nishad had accompanied Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman till Chitrakoot from where he was asked by the Lord to return home. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 142--wherein it is stated that Nishad returned home after the Lord settled down in his first hermitage at Chitrakoot.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 94.]

Verse no. 60:

{Verse nos. 60 to 63, like the previous verse nos. 54 to 57, once again form a group of four verses closely related to each other. But in the present case, they are segregated for reading convenience.}

पयोधरैः पुण्यजनाङ्गनानाम्निर्विष्टहेमाम्बुजरेणु यस्याः।
ब्राह्मन्सरः कारणमाप्तवाचो बुद्धेरिवव्यक्तमुदाहरन्ति॥ १३-६०

payodharaiḥ puṇyajanāṅganānāmniṛviṣṭahemāmbujareṇu yasyāḥ |
brāhmamsaraḥ kāraṇamāptavāco buddherivāvyaktamudāharanti || 13-60

13-60. Learned sages assert that knowledge of all kind (which is a subtle thing with no physical forms and boundaries, but its existence is nevertheless undisputed) has come from the creator Brahma (who is also invisible but his existence cannot be challenged as it is he who had created this world, including the Vedas which are repositories of all knowledge).

Likewise, they also assert that river Saryu (that flanks the city of Ayodhya) has its origin in lake Mansarovar said to be created by Brahma himself. {In physical terms, Mansarovar lake is located in the upper reaches of the Himalayas. River Saryu is said to have originated from this lake.}

The female Yakshas (a sort of demi-god or spirit usually regarded as benign and helpful) apply the nectar obtained from the golden lotuses found in this Mansarovar lake as an ointment that they rub on their bosoms.

Verse no. 61:

**जलानि या तीरनिखातयूपा वहत्ययोध्यामनु राजधानीम्।
तुरंगमेधावभृथावतीर्णः इक्ष्वाकुभिः पुण्यतरीकृतानि॥ १३-६१**

jalāni yā tīranikhātayūpā vahatyayodhyāmanu rājadhānīm |
turaṅgamedhāvabhṛthāvatīrṇaiḥ ikṣvākubhiḥ puṇyatarīkṛtāni || 13-61

13-61. This city of Ayodhya, which is the ancient capital of the kings of the Ikshwaku race, is situated on the banks of this river Saryu which flows on its northern flanks. On its banks many sacrificial posts have been erected where religious sacrifices used to be routinely conducted in the past, and are still conducted. Its water is deemed to be purifying and holy because kings of the Solar Race used to take a bath in it to purify themselves after successfully completing their Aswamedha Yagya (the horse sacrifice).

Verse no. 62:

**याम्सैकतोत्सङ्गसुखोचितानाम् प्राज्यैः पयोभिः परिवर्धितानाम्।
सामान्यधात्रीमिव मानसम्मे संभावयत्युत्तरकोसलानाम्॥ १३-६२**

yāmsaikatotsaṅgasukhocitānām prājyaiḥ payobhiḥ parivardhitānām |
sāmānyadhātrīmiva mānasamme sambhāvayatyuttarakosalānām || 13-62

13-62. I (Lord Ram) have great respect for this river (Saryu) because it is like a nurse that has taken care of and sustained the great rulers of the kingdom of Kaushal. All of them play around its sandy banks, and they grow up drinking its sweet water which nurtures them.

Verse no. 63:

**सेयम्मदीया जननीव तेन मान्येन राज्ञ्या सरयूर्वियुक्ता।
दूरे वसन्तम्शिशिरानिलैर्माम् तरंगहस्तैरुपगूहतीव॥ १३-६३**

seyammadiyā jananīv tena mānyena rājñyā sarayūrviyuktā |
dūre vasantamśīśīrānilairmām taraṅgahastairupagūhātiva || 13-63

13-63. Like my dear mother (Kaushalya), who has been separated from my revered father king Dasrath (because he has died), would raise her loving arms to welcome and embrace

me whenever she saw me, the waves of cool water of river Saryu also seem to rise up to welcome and embrace me when it cited my plane in the sky.

Verse no. 64:

विरक्तसंध्याकपिशम्परस्तात् यतो रजः पार्थिवमुज्जिहीते।

शङ्के हनूमत्कथितप्रवृत्तिः प्रत्युद्गतो माम्भरतः ससैन्यः॥ १३-६४

viraktasāṁdhyākapiśamparastāt yato rajaḥ pāṛthivamujjihīte |
śaṅke hanūmatkathitapravṛttiḥ pratyudgato māmbharataḥ sasainyaḥ || 13-64

13-64. Look down below. A cloud of brown-coloured dust is rising up from the ground. It seems to me that after Hanuman had informed Bharat that I have come back¹, he (Bharat) is coming forward to welcome me along with a large company consisting of citizens, courtiers and army.

[Note--¹Lord Ram had sent Hanuman in advance to inform Bharat about his return. As soon as Bharat got this good news, he informed everyone in the city. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 121; and (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 3.}

At that time Bharat was staying in Nandigram on the outskirts of Ayodhya. So a large number of people gathered and came from the city to join Bharat when he welcomed Lord Ram in Nandigram. The dust was kicked up by the movement of these people from the city of Ayodhya to the outskirts at Nandigram.]

Verse no. 65:

अद्धा श्रियम्पालितसंगराय प्रत्यर्पयिष्यत्यनघाम्स साधुः।

हत्वा निवृत्ताय मृधे खरादीन् संरक्षितामत्वामिव लक्ष्मणो मे॥ १३-६५

addhā śriyampālitasan̄garāya pratyarpayīṣyatyanaghāmsa sādhuḥ |
hatvā nivṛttāya mṛdhe kharādīn samrakṣitāmtvāmiva lakṣmaṇo me || 13-65

13-65. When I had to engage the demons Khar, Dushan etc. at Panchvati, I had entrusted your safety to Laxman while I tackled them. After I had finished the job, Laxman had handed your custody safely back to me¹.

In the same way, Bharat now is getting ready to safely return the crown of Ayodhya to me which I had earlier kept in his safe custody for the period of my forest sojourn².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede Doha no. 18; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 21.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 313 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that follow it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 316; and (iii) Doha no. 323 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.]

Verse no. 66:

असौ पुरस्कृत्य गुरुम्पदातिः पश्चादवस्थापितवाहिनीकः।

वृद्धैरमात्यैः सह चीरवासा मामर्घ्यपाणिर्भरतोऽप्युपैति॥ १३-६६

asau puraskṛtya gurumpadātiḥ paścādavasthāpitavāhinīkaḥ |
vṛddhairamātyaiḥ saha cīravāsā māmarghyapāṇirbharato'pyupaiti || 13-66

13-66. {Addressing Sita, Lord Ram tells her with cheer in his heart.} "Look! There is Bharat wearing ochre clothes of an ascetic. He is coming on foot, holding a platter full of auspicious herbs and other paraphernalia needed to welcome me. He is accompanied by elderly ministers and courtiers, and behind them is a large detachment of the army. Sage Vashistha is leading this procession from the front.

Verse no. 67:

पित्रा विसृष्टाम्मदपेक्षया यः श्रियम्युवाप्यङ्कगतामभोक्ता।

इयन्ति वर्षाणि तया सहोग्रम् अभ्यस्यतीव व्रतमासिधारम्॥ १३-६७

pitṛā visṛṣṭāmmadapekṣayā yaḥ śriyamyuvāpyaṅkagatāmabhoktā |
iyanti varṣāṇi tayā sahogram abhyasyatīva vratamāsidhāram || 13-67

13-67. Just like the case of a young man exercising exemplary self-control over his natural instincts of sexual enjoyments by paying no attention to a young and beautiful damsel who comes to sit on his lap with lustful desire for sexual gratification, which is a temptation too powerful to resist, and if successfully done will be equivalent to walking barefoot on the sharp edge of a sword, so likewise in a similar way did Bharat resist the overwhelming temptation of enjoying the comforts, pleasures and powers that come to a person naturally with the kingdom of a mighty and prosperous kingdom such as that of Ayodhya, and instead he led a life of renunciation like that of a hermit for the entire period of fourteen years of my forest exile to honour the wish of our father."

Verse no. 68:

एतावदुक्तवति दाशरथौ तदीया मिच्छाम्बिमानमधिदेवतया विदित्वा।

ज्योतिष्पथादवततार सविस्मयाभि रुद्वीक्षितम्प्रकृतिभिर्भरतानुगाभिः॥ १३-६८

etāvaduktavati dāśarathau tadyā micchāmvimānamadhidevatayā veditvā |
jyotiṣpathādavatātāra savismayābhi rudvīkṣitamprakṛtibhirbharatānugābhiḥ || 13-68

13-68. When Lord Ram told Sita about Bharat coming to meet him, the sensors aboard the Pushpak plane, which could sense the chief patron's wishes, got the hint--that Lord Ram wants to meet Bharat, the plane automatically descended on the ground and landed in front of the approaching procession. This development left everyone on the ground, Bharat, the ministers, the army, and the rest of the senior citizens, amazed.

{It is probably because none of them had ever seen such a wonderful flying machine earlier in their lives. And to add to their astonishment, they could see Lord Ram and Sita seated on a raised platform on the plane, with Laxman standing by his side along with a large number of other guests, the chief commanders of the Lord's army who had accompanied him from Lanka. The citizens had never seen any of these guests, some with the form of monkeys and bears, and others, such as Vibhishan, having bodies of a demon. This sight was beyond imagination of the people of Ayodhya who had seen Lord Ram walking on foot to the forest. They were full of wonder and awe at seeing the Lord sitting on a majestic plane surrounded by so many strangers.}

Verse no. 69:

तस्मात्पुरःसरबिभीषणदर्शनेन सेवाविचक्षणहरीश्वरदत्तहस्तः।
यानादवातरदूरमहीतलेन मार्गेण भङ्गिरचितस्फटिकेन रामः॥ १३-६९

tasmātpuraḥsarabibhīṣaṇadarśanena sevāvicakṣaṇaharīśvaradattahastah |
yānādavātaradūramahītalena mārgēṇa bhaṅgiracitasphaṭikena rāmaḥ ||
13-69

13-69. As the plane touched the ground, Lord Ram held the hand of Sugriv, who was ever-ready to serve the Lord, to take support while coming down the quartz-studded stairs of the plane. Vibhishan walked a step ahead on one side of the Lord to escort him forward to meet Bharat.

Verse no. 70:

इक्ष्वाकुवंशगुरवे प्रयतः प्रणम्य स भ्रातरम्भरतमर्घ्यपरिग्रहान्ते।
पर्यश्रुरस्वजत मूर्धनि चोपजघ्नौ तद्भक्त्यपोढपितृराज्यमहाभिषेके॥ १३-७०

ikṣvākuvaṁśagurave prayataḥ praṇamya sa
bhrātarambharatamarghyaparigrahānte |
paryaśrurasvajata mūrdhani copajaghrau
tadbhaktyapodhapitrājyamahābhiṣeke || 13-70

13-70. When the plane landed, Lord Ram got off it, and he reverentially bowed before sage Vashistha who was the chief priest and preceptor of the kings of the Ikshawaku race. Then Lord Ram sipped some sanctified water and, with tears in his eyes, he affectionately embraced Bharat and smelled (or kissed) his forehead which had rejected the crown of the kingdom out of love for the Lord.

[Note--Lord Ram showed his great appreciation for Bharat's devotion and dedication to him, and his decision to reject the crown and its associated benefits because of this devotion for the Lord, by first affectionately embracing Bharat, and then kissing him on his forehead--because it is the head on which a person wears the crown.]

Verse no. 71:

श्मश्रुप्रवृद्धिजनिताननविक्रियांश्च प्लक्षान्प्ररोहजटिलानिव मन्त्रिवृद्धान्।
अन्वग्रहीत्प्रणमतः शुभदृष्टिपातैर्वीतानुयोगमधुराक्षरया च वाचा॥ १३-७१

śmaśrupravṛddhijanitānanavikriyāṁśca
plakṣānprarohajaṭilāniva mantrivṛddhān |
anvagrahītpṛaṇamataḥ śubhadṛṣṭipātai
rvātānuyogamadhurākṣarayā ca vācā || 13-71

13-71. After that, Lord Ram met the elderly ministers and courtiers who had come to welcome him home. The Lord spoke with them in a sweet voice and tears in his eyes while asking them about their welfare. Since Lord Ram had long matted hairs and a flowing beard, he looked like a banyan tree with thick branches that are covered with a dense foliage.

Verse no. 72:

दुर्जातबन्धुरयमृक्षहरीश्वरो मे पौलस्त्य एष समरेषु पुरःप्रहर्ता।
इत्यादृतेन कथितौ रघुनन्दनेन व्युत्क्रम्य लक्ष्मणमुभौ भरतो ववन्दे॥ १३-७२

durjātabandhurayamṛkṣaharīśvaro me
paulastya eṣa samareṣu puraḥprahartā |
ityādr̥tena kathitau raghunandanena
vyutkramya lakṣmaṇamubhau bharato vavande || 13-72

13-72. Lord Ram then introduced his companions to Bharat. Introducing Sugriv, the Lord told Bharat: "He is the king of monkeys and bears. He had been very helpful to me during my difficult times."

Then, introduction Vibhishan, the Lord said: "His name is Vibhishan, and he is born in the race of the sage Pulastya. During the war (of Lanka to free Sita), he took the ground and attacked the enemy before we could, fighting the enemy from the front."

When Bharat came to know about them, he bowed before them to show his respect, even before he met Laxman.

Verse no. 73:

सौमित्रिणा तदनु संससृजे स चैन मुत्थाप्य नम्रशिरसम्भृशमालिलिङ्ग।
रुढेन्द्रजित्प्रहरणव्रणकर्कशेन क्लिश्यन्निवास्य भुजमध्यमुरस्थलेन॥ १३-७३

saumitriṇā tadanu saṁsasrje sa caina
mutthāpya namraśirasambhṛśamāliliṅga |
rūḍhendrajitpraharaṇavraṇakarkaśena
kliśyannivāsyā bhujamadhyamurasthalena || 13-73

13-73. After that, Bharat met Laxman who was bowing before him respectfully. Bharat lifted his bowed head and affectionately embraced him by clasping Laxman, whose chest had many sores caused by the wounds made by the weapons of Meghanad, tightly to his bosom.

Verse no. 74:

रामाज्यया हरिचमूपतयस्तदानीम् कृत्वा मनुष्यवपुरारुरुगजेन्द्रान्।
तेषु क्षरत्सु बहुधा मदवारिधाराः शैलाधिरोहणसुखान्युपलेभिरेते॥ १३-७४

rāmājñyayā haricamūpatayastadānīm
kṛtvā manuṣyavapurāruruhurgajendrān |
teṣu kṣaratsu bahudhā madavāridhārāḥ
śailādhirohaṇasukhānyupalebhirete || 13-74

13-74. On the instructions of Lord Ram, his companions who came with him on the plane, i.e. the chieftains of the monkeys and bears (such as Sugriv and Angad representing the monkeys, and Jamvant representing the bears), assumed the form of humans¹.

Then they were requested to ride atop elephants, from whose foreheads ichors were seeping out², for their journey to the city of Ayodhya³. They used the trunks of these elephants to get up on their backs as was their natural habit from their days in the forest where they would climb on the branches and trunks of trees to reach the top.

Now, since ichor was seeping out from the foreheads of these elephants and dripping around their temples and trunks, these monkey companions of Lord Ram felt the same pleasure while climbing up the elephants' trunks as they would get when they would rise up the sides of hills and mountains on which water-falls were sliding down from the top, drenching them with cool water and making them very playful.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 8.

²Ichor of an elephant: It is a scented viscous liquid or sap that effuses out from the forehead of adult male elephants, specially in their rut season. An elephant from whom the ichor is seeping out is considered very healthy and in the prime of his age. This sap flows from the forehead and drips down the temples of the elephant.

³The party that come from the city to receive Lord Ram had brought along elephants and chariots for the Lord's ride back to the city from its outskirts in Nandigram where the plane landed. We shall soon read in the verses that follow herein below that Lord Ram asked his companions, who by now had assumed human forms, to get on the elephants and chariots for their ride into the city, while he himself got back on the plane along with Bharat, Laxman and Sita to enter the city via the air route.

Though it is nowhere mentioned how Shatrughan, the younger brother of Bharat, went back, whether he had accompanied the Lord on the plane, or if he had led the procession on the ground back into the city, but in all probability he was allowed to stay on the ground to escort Lord Ram's companions from Lanka as they moved to the city of Ayodhya as a mark of etiquette and observance of protocol for guests.]

Verse no. 75:

सानुप्लवः प्रभुरपि क्षणदाचराणाम् भेजे रथान्दशरथप्रभवानुशिष्टः।

मायाविकल्परचितैरपि ये तदीयैर्न स्यन्दनैस्तुलितकृत्रिमभक्तिशोभाः॥ १३-७५

sānuplavaḥ prabhurapi kṣaṇadācarāṇām bheje rathāndaśarathaprabhavānuśiṣṭaḥ
|
māyāvikalparacitairapi ye tadiyai
rna syandanaistulitakṛtrimabhaktiśobhāḥ || 13-75

13-75. On the instructions of Lord Ram, Vibhishan and his companions got atop the many chariots brought there. These chariots, though made by humans, yet were so magnificent and luxurious that they surpassed the beauty and the charm of the chariots that skilled craftsmen of the demon race could ever make. {To wit, the chariots of Lanka, which Vibhishan was accustomed to ride, seemed ramshackle, makeshift vehicles when compared to the wonderfully crafted chariots of Ayodhya.}

[Note--Vibhishan was the prince of the demon race of Lanka. The demons were skilled in the art of magic and creating things so wonderful, bearing an out-of-world look, that would be unimaginable for ordinary human beings to make or even replicate. So, when Vibhishan saw the magnificent chariots of Ayodhya, he was spellbound by their beauty and luxurious interiors.]

Verse no. 76:

भूयस्ततो रघुपतिर्विलसत्पताक मध्यास्त कामगति सावरजो विमानम्।
दोषातनम्बुधबृहस्पतियोगदृश्य स्तारापतिस्तरलविद्युदिवाभ्रवृन्दम्॥ १३-७६

bhūyastato raghupatirvilasatpatāka madhyāsta kāmagati sāvarajo vimānam |
doṣātanambudhabṛhaspatiyogaḍṛśya stārāpatistaralavidyudivābhraṇḍam || 13-
76

13-76. Thence, along with his two brothers Laxman and Bharat, Lord Ram got on the Pushpak plane which was adorned by banners and flags, and which had the unique ability to move in accordance with the wish of its chief patron, in the same way as the full Moon that adorns the evening sky sitting atop silvery clouds, and flanked by the planets Budha and Brihaspati (i.e. Mercury and Jupiter respectively)¹.

[Note--¹The planet Budha or Mercury represents intelligence, knowledge, logic and communication. According to mythology, Budha is the son of the Moon-God and his consort Tara (meaning stars that surround the moon).

Brihaspati or Jupiter is the guru or preceptor, teacher and advisor of the gods. He is also known for his wisdom, intelligence and far-sightedness. He is the guide of the gods, and the lord of knowledge and eloquence. He is an embodiment of the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness and divine rule. He is the patron god of wisdom, sagacity and erudition as well as of speech (Shathpath Brahman, 14/4/1/22). He is first mentioned in the Rig Veda, 1/139/10; 1/190.

Both Bharat and Laxman possessed these characters, and Lord Ram loved them and treated them as if they were his sons. Bharat possessed all the virtues of Brihaspati, while Laxman represented Budha.]

Verse no. 77:

तत्रेश्वरेण जगताम्प्रलयादिवोर्वी वर्षात्ययेन रुचमभ्रघनादिवेन्दोः।
रामेण मैथिलसुतामदशकण्ठकृच्छ्रा त्प्रत्युद्धतामधृतिमतीम्भरतो ववन्दे॥ १३-७७

tatreśvareṇa jagatāmpralayādivorvīm
varṣātyayena rucamabhraghanādivendoḥ |
rāmeṇa maithilasutāmdaśakaṇṭhakṛcchrā
tpratyuddhṛtāmdhṛtimatīmbharato vavande || 13-77

13-77. When Bharat boarded the Pushpak plane, he bowed his head before Sita¹ whose glory, holiness and immaculate character were patiently and resolutely protected by Lord Ram from being tarnished by the demon king Ravana, and were restored fully in the same way as Adi-Varaha (the ancient Boar) had salvaged the earth from getting drowned during the doomsday deluge, and the autumn season that makes the moonlight shine through after it was marred by thick dark clouds of the previous rainy season².

[Note--¹This verse clearly shows that Sita had remained on board the plane when it touched down on the ground, and Lord Ram and others stepped down from it to meet Bharat and others who had come to receive the Lord.

²In this analogy, Lord Ram is the Adi-Varaha, Sita is the earth, and Ravana is the doomsday deluge that had almost drowned the earth and ruined it if had not been salvaged by the Adi-Varaha.

Again, just like the beautiful moonlight shines on the earth through the clear sky of autumn after the dark clouds of the rainy season had all but marred its brilliance, so likewise Lord Ram had restored the dignity, glory, beauty and charm of Sita after what seemed to be a period of gloom and despair for her.

The story of Adi-Varaha, or the ancient Boar, in brief is this: It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the ocean where it had vanished. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana, Book III, Chapter 13, 18 and 19. In brief it is as follows:

In the beginning of creation, Lord Brahma, the creator, produced Manu and Satrupa, the first male and female. The couple asked the creator to tell them what they are expected to do, at which Brahma told them to start the process of procreation and spread their off-springs on the ground, thereby propagating the human race. Manu was left flummoxed as he did not see any land to carry out his mandate. It was because the demon Hiranyaaksha had hidden it under water of the celestial ocean (or in the void of the nether world ruled by the demons).

Finding no land to stand upon and start the process of procreation, Manu complained to Brahma; the latter meditated and discovered the reason for the earth's disappearance. Brahma then appealed to Lord Vishnu, the 'sustainer and protector of this creation, and the second god of the Trinity'. Immediately, a Vishnu manifested himself as a tiny 'Boar', the size of a thumb, which grew in size to assume a phenomenal dimension. The Boar dug up the earth from where it was concealed, held it secure on its tusks and revealed it for Brahma.

Meanwhile, when the demon Hiranyaaksha came to know of it, he faced Lord Boar with his gigantic mace and challenged the latter for a duel. In the battle that followed, Lord Vishnu, disguised as a Boar, slayed the demon and finally set the earth free from his clutches.

An interesting development played out in the meantime. The rescued earth itself needed somewhere to be kept. It was like a huge 'ball'. So, the Boar placed it on the surface of the celestial ocean from underneath of which it was rescued, and by his mystical powers made it float on it like a buoy. This is why the land mass of the earth seems to be surrounded by water from all sides.

This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.]

Verse no. 78:

लङ्केश्वरप्रणतिभङ्गदृढव्रतमन्त द्वन्द्वम्युगम्चरणयोर्जनकात्मजायाः।
जेष्ठानुवृत्तिजटिलमच शिरोऽस्य साधो रन्योन्यपावनमभूदुभयम्समेत्य ॥ १३-७८

laṅkeśvarapraṇatibhaṅgadṛḍhavrataṁta
dvandyamyugamcaraṇayorjanakātmajāyāḥ |
jeṣṭhānuvṛttijaṭilamca śiro'sya sādho
ranyonyapāvanamabhūdubhayamsametya || 13-78

13-78. When Bharat, who, out of love and reverence for his elder brother Lord Ram, had grown a thick plait of hairs that were matted around his head into a crown, and who had grown long beards on his radiant face, put his head on the two lotus-like feet of Sita, feet that had rejected the overtures of Ravana, then it seemed that both of them, i.e. the feet of Sita and the head of Bharat, had sanctified each other, and had attained a combined glory unmatched in the world.

Verse no. 79:

क्रोशार्धम्प्रकृतिपुरःसरेण गत्वा काकुत्स्थः स्तिमितजवेन पुष्पकेण।
शत्रुघ्नप्रतिविहितोपकार्यमार्यः साकेतोपवनमुदारमध्युवास ॥ १३-७९

krośārdhamprakṛtipuraḥsareṇa gatvā kākutsthaḥ stimitajavena puṣpakeṇa |
śatrughnaprativihitopakāryamāryaḥ sāketopavanamudāramadhyuvāsa ||
13-79

13-79. The citizens of Ayodhya (who had come to receive Lord Ram) led the procession, that was moving back into the city, from the front, while the Pushpak plane, with Lord Ram on board, followed them from the rear. In this way, after proceeding for a distance of half a kosha¹, Lord Ram encamped in a royal garden that had already been spruced up and made ready by Shatrughan (younger brother of Bharat) to be used as a temporary halt for the Lord before his final entry inside the city of Ayodhya.

[Note--¹A kosha is an ancient measurement of distance. With reference to the mile, it is equivalent to approximately 1.8 or 1.9 miles, or about 2 miles if rounded off. Hence, half a kosha would be a distance of about 1 mile.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये त्रयोदशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye trayodaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 13th Canto of Kalidasa's Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 14, verse nos. 1-87:

Introduction

After spending some time in the garden on the outskirts of Ayodhya, Lord Ram and Laxman entered the city. They first met their mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively. The mothers had been very distraught because of two misfortunes that had befallen them one after the other--the first was that their sons Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to the forest, and second, their husband, king Dashrath, had died as a consequence of this shock. Now, when they saw their sons, the dam of their patience burst, and torrents of tears drained down their eyes as they lovingly embraced the two brothers.

After that, Sita too bowed before her mothers-in-law who blessed her, saying that it was the strength of her chastity, character and loyalty towards her husband Lord Ram and her motherly love for Laxman that had successfully protected them during the testing times of the last fourteen years of their forest exile.

Thereafter, the senior ministers of the court anointed Lord Ram as the king following an elaborate ritual wherein holy waters from all over the earth were sprinkled on the Lord. Then Lord Ram was formally honoured by all the citizens amidst a lot of fanfare and celebrations. The Lord then went to the palace of his late father Dashrath where he met Kaikeyi, mother of Bharat, and the one at whose behest king Dashrath was forced to send Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita to the forest. Lord Ram affectionately met Kaikeyi and paid her great respect, showing no ill-will against her, which in turn provided her great relief and removed the burden of guilt from her mind.

After some time, Lord Ram gave gifts to his friends such as Sugriv, Vibhishan etc, and requested them to return home, telling them that they would always be welcomed in Ayodhya whenever they pleased to come. The Lord then asked the Pushpak plane to return to Kuber, its original owner before Ravana had snatched it.

Thereafter, Lord Ram began his reign in a very exemplary manner by following all the rules and regulations as described in the scriptures. The citizens were very happy and contented. *

Once, sage Agastya came to visit the Lord, and narrated to him the story of Ravana.

In due course, Sita became pregnant. One day, while Lord Ram was surveying the skyline of the city of Ayodhya from his royal palace, he asked one of his trusted spies about what the subjects were speaking of him. The spy first hesitated, but on the Lord's insistence he told him that some common people were privately raising doubts about the purity and integrity of Sita as she had spent quite a long time in the palace of her abductor Ravana. Lord Ram was, of course, stunned and speechless as he had already tested Sita's chastity and purity by making her undergo the fire test in Lanka itself before accepting her. But still, the Lord did not want that his subjects harbour any kind of misgivings about his character as that would undermine both his and Sita's reputation. If he has to enforce discipline in his kingdom and expect that his subjects live honest lives characterised by righteousness, probity and good conduct, then he must first clear his own name from taints. Using force against his subjects and punishing the person who was

making such baseless allegations would be counterproductive as then people would say that their doubts were indeed true.

So the Lord thought that the best option for him was to abandon Sita for the rest of his life. He thus called Laxman and asked him, with a very heavy and distraught heart, to take Sita to the hermitage of sage Valmiki and leave her there in the sage's safe custody.

So, Laxman took Sita on a chariot, and with the excuse that he would take her around to see the many gardens and forests of the kingdom, he took her to the banks of river Ganges, and told her about Lord Ram's decision. Sita was taken aback and totally numbed by this unwarranted and unexpected development. She did not show any anger towards Lord Ram, but regarded her abandonment as purely her bad luck and darkness of her destiny.

As her last message, Sita told Laxman to go back and tell her respects to mothers-in-law, asking them to bless her pregnancy, and to tell Lord Ram to forgive her if she had committed any error in life, and that she was also his subject, and therefore it was incumbent upon him and his sacrosanct duty to take care of her too. She had proved her innocence by the fire-test before everyone present in Lanka itself, and its absolutely unbelievable and profoundly astonishing that such wild allegations against her character are raised in spite of it. Nevertheless, she bows her head before the wishes of her husband and accepts whatever is written in her fate and destiny. Now, she said that she would do severe Tapa (penance) with the sun-god as a witness to further clean her, and ask for a boon that in her next birth she would once again be united and find nearness with her beloved husband Lord Ram.

After Laxman left, Sita began weeping and lamenting loudly, and her wailings made all the animals and trees sad and grief-stricken. When sage Valmiki heard of her pitiful cries, he followed the directions from where the sound came, and found Sita alone and abandoned. Valmiki was overwhelmed with profound grief, and since he had the spiritual powers to see things not visible to the eye and are beyond the present, he immediately realised what had happened. He comforted Sita and told her not to worry at all, as he is like her father and would take full care of her; she needn't feel alone and abandoned. Valmiki took Sita to his hermitage and made her feel at home. He told Sita that he would treat her like his own daughter, and when she gave birth to her children he would take full care and responsibility for their well-being and education. She must feel at home in his hermitage, and for company she will have other daughters and wives of sages who live around his hermitage. Further, the charming environment of the green forest with its rivers, fruit trees, fresh air, and the religious activities that are daily conducted in his hermitage would keep her engaged and entertained.

So, Sita accompanied the exalted sage Valmiki to his hermitage where the sage lodged her in a thatched cottage. Sita found company with other young and old ladies of the many sages who lived either in sage Valmiki's own hermitage or in the hermitages of the surrounding sages.

When Laxman returned and told Lord Ram everything, the Lord wept bitterly as he loved Sita beyond everything else, and he had to leave her physically to avoid controversy, but she had an inalienable and inseparable place in his heart for all times to come; she always lived in his heart though she was not present with him in physical terms.

As time moved on, Lord Ram kept himself busy by engaging in the routine affairs of the kingdom. He performed many Ashwamedha (horse) sacrifices where a golden statue of Sita was used to represent her. When Sita heard that the Lord did not marry again and had used her golden statue during the horse sacrifices, her grief was somewhat alleviated as she realised that the Lord still loved her and treated her as his wife. #

{* This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 8-to Doha no. 24.

This part of the story, i.e. the part dealing with Sita's abandonment, is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 1-4.}

Now, let us resume our reading of the text of Canto 14 of Raghuvansham as follows:-

Verse no. 1:

**भर्तुः प्रणाशादथ शोचनीयम् दशान्तरम् तत्र समम् प्रपन्ने।
अपश्यताम् दाशरथी जनन्यौ छेदादिवोपघ्नतरोर्व्रतत्यौ ॥ १४-१**

bhartuḥ praṇāśādatha śocanīyam daśāntaram tatra samam prapanne |
apaśyatām dāśarathī jananyau chedādivopaghñatarorvratatyau || 14-1

14-1. {At the end of the previous Canto no. 13 we have read that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman stopped for a while at a royal garden on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya which Shatrughan had prepared for a short rest of the Lord before his entry in the city. The mothers of Lord Ram and Laxman, i.e. Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively, were present there at the time of the arrival of the Lord in the garden. The two mothers, along with other senior ladies of the city, had accompanied the general procession of the citizens that had gone out to receive Lord Ram at Nandigram, but all the ladies had stayed behind and encamped midway in this garden in accordance with the royal protocols and traditions of the time. This is the reason why Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman made a stopover here instead of proceeding straight to the city.}

Lord Ram and Laxman met their respective mothers in that royal garden where they had made a brief stopover before proceeding to the city of Ayodhya. The two mothers were in a deplorable condition, and they wore a sad, sunken and grief-stricken look like a pair of creepers that has lost the support of the tree on which they had all along relied for support and shelter, because that tree had been cut down.

[Note--The two queens were heart-broken and sad because they had lost their husband, king Dashrath who had died soon after Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had gone to the forest--i.e. fourteen years ago. In this verse, the tree that gives support to the creeper is king Dashrath, while the two mothers are compared to the creepers that find support and shelter in the tree.]

Verse no. 2:

उभावु भाभ्याम् प्रणतौ हत अरी यथा क्रमम् विक्रम शोभिनी तौ।

विस्पष्टम् अस्र अन्धतया न दृष्टौ ज्ञातौ सुत-स्पर्श सुख उपलम्भात् ॥ १४-२

ubhāvu bhābhyām praṇatau hata arī yathā kramam vikrama śobhināu tau |
vispaṣṭam asra andhatayā na dr̥ṣṭau jñyātau suta-sparśa sukha upalambhāt ||
14-2

14-2. Both the brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, who were vanquishers of enemies and were renowned for their valour and courage, then bowed before both the mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively, one after another. The eyes of the two mothers were full of tears which dimmed their vision so much so that they could not properly see their sons, but they could recognise their sons only when the two brothers touched their feet and the mothers reciprocated by touching their heads affectionately. This awareness that their beloved sons are back home filled the two mothers with joy.

Verse no. 3:

आनन्दजः शोकजमश्रुबाष्पः तयोरशीतम् शिशिरो बिभेद।

गङ्गासरय्वोर्जलमुष्णतप्तम् हिमाद्रिनिःस्यन्द इवावतीर्णः ॥ १४-३

ānandajaḥ śokajamaśrubāṣpaḥ tayoraśītam śīśiro bibheda |
gaṅgāsarayvorjalamuṣṇataptam himādrinisyananda ivāvatīrṇaḥ || 14-3

14-3. Just as the cool water cascading down the slope of the snow-clad Himalaya mountains would cool down the water of the rivers Ganges and Saryu that had become hot during the scorching heat of summer days, so likewise the cool tears of joy and happiness coming out of the eyes of the mothers cooled down the tears of grief and sadness that had been flowing down their eyes till then.

Verse no. 4:

ते पुत्रयोः नैऋतशस्त्रमार्गान् आर्द्रानिवाङ्गे सदयम् स्पृशन्तौ।

अपीप्सितम् क्षत्रकुलाङ्गनानाम् न वीरसूशब्दमकामयेताम् ॥ १४-४

te putrayoḥ nair̥taśastramārgān ādrānivāṅge sadayam spr̥śantau |
apīpsitam kṣatrakulāṅganānām na vīrasūśabdamakāmayetām || 14-4

14-4. When the mothers saw the marks of wounds made on the bodies of the two brothers by the attack of the demons (during the war of Lanka), they began to tenderly touch them and feel them softly with their nimble fingers as if the wounds were still raw (although they had healed by now, except the scar tissue that would take time to wear off). At that time the mothers became very upset and worried regarding the injury that their sons had suffered, forgetting that they were mothers of heroes who were supposed to have a strong

heart and exercise control over their emotions when they see war-wounds on their sons' bodies, as these wounds are signs of valour, courage and bravery behoving of a warrior, and not signs of cowardice.

Verse no. 5:

क्लेशावहा भर्तुरलक्षणाहम् सीतेति नाम स्वमुदीरयन्ती।

स्वर्गप्रतिष्ठस्य गुरोर्महिष्या वभक्तिभेदेन वधूर्ववन्दे ॥ १४-५

kleśāvahā bharturalakṣaṇāham sīteti nāma svamudīrayantī |

svargapraṭiṣṭhasya gurormahiṣyā vabhaktibhedena vadhūrvavande || 14-5

14-5. Sita then bowed and touched the feet of the two widowed mothers-in-law with equal respect and devotion. While doing so, she said: "Oh respected mothers! I am Sita, the unfortunate one who had brought so much misery to my husband (Lord Ram)¹."

[Note--¹Sita was expressing her regret for being the cause of so much suffering of Lord Ram in the forest as it was she on whose account Lord Ram and Laxman had to fight the ferocious war with the demons, a war that led to so many wounds on their bodies.

Now the context of Sita's observation is markedly clear--when she observed that the mothers were sad when they saw deep scars of wounds on the bodies of Lord Ram and Laxman, she felt guilty as these wounds were made during the war to free her from the grip of the demons of Lanka. Had she not been with them, or had she been more fortunate, there was no reason why her husband, Lord Ram, and her brother-in-law Laxman would suffer so many wounds because they would not have fought any war for her.]

Verse no. 6:

उत्तिष्ठ वत्से ननु स अनुजोः असौ वृत्तेन भर्ता शुचिना तवैव।

कृच्छ्रम् महत्तीर्ण इव प्रियार्हाम् तामूचतुस्ते प्रियमप्यमिथ्या ॥ १४-६

uttiṣṭha vatse nanu sa anujoh asau vṛttena bhartā śucinā tavaiva |

kṛcchram mahattīrṇa iva priyārham tāmūcatuste priyamapyamithyā || 14-6

14-6. The two mothers-in-law lifted Sita very affectionately, and told her not to feel remorseful at all. They said to her: "Our dear daughter! Do not feel any regret or remorse, for it is quite the contrary from what you had just said. In fact, it was the strength of your character, your virtuousness, loyalty, devotion and steadfastness in the face of adversities that had protected the two young brothers from the calamity that had befallen them, and your courage and resilience during those adversities are truly praiseworthy. So therefore, there is nothing to feel guilty about."

Verse no. 7:

अथाभिषेकम् रघुवंशकेतोः प्रारब्धमानन्दजलैर्जनन्योः।

निर्वर्तयामासुरमात्यवृद्धाः तीर्थाहृतैः काञ्चनकुम्भतोयैः ॥ १४-७

athābhiṣekam raghuvaṁśaketoh prārabdhamānandajalairjananyoh |
nirvartayāmāsuramātyavṛddhāḥ tīrthāhṛtaiḥ kāñcanakumbhatoyaiḥ || 14-7

14-7. After that, the ministers of the kingdom formally anointed Lord Ram as the king by sprinkling on him waters collected in golden pots from the holy rivers of different pilgrim places of the land. The Lord Ram's anointment had already been initiated with the tears of the mothers that fell on him (when the Lord met them), and it was now formally completed with this official ritual conducted by the ministers.

Verse no. 8:

सरित्समुद्रान्सरसीश्च गत्वा रक्षःकपीन्द्रैरुपपादितानि।

तस्यापतन्मूर्ध्नि जलानि जिष्णोः विन्ध्यस्य मेघप्रभवा इवापः ॥ १४-८

saritsamudrānsarasīśca gatvā rakṣaḥkapīndrairupapāditāni |
tasyāpatanmūrdhni jalāni jiṣṇoh vindhyasya meghaprabhavā ivāpaḥ || 14-8

14-8. Meanwhile, the commanders of the monkeys and demons had ordered their kinsfolk to bring large pitchers of different oceans, rivers, lakes and waterfalls from across the country, and at the time of Lord Ram's anointment on the throne of the kingdom these waters were poured on his head just like the water brought by the clouds is showered as rain on the summit of Mt. Vindhyachal.

[Note--The friends of Lord Ram such as Sugriv and Vibhishan made their contribution in the auspicious ceremony of anointment of Lord Ram as the king by ordering their respective compatriots, the monkeys and demons respectively, to spread out and immediately bring water from far-flung places of the land to be used in the anointment ceremony. Since they were faster in movement than men, they were deputed to bring water from oceans, rivers, lakes and waterfalls by the time preparations were being made for the elaborate anointment ceremony.

The collected water was poured on Lord Ram during the ritual of anointment. It reminded one of how the cloud pours torrents of rainwater on the summit of Vindhyachal mountain during a heavy downpour.]

Verse no. 9:

तपस्विवेषक्रिययापि तावत् यः प्रेक्षणीयः सुतराम् बभूव।

राजेन्द्रनेपथ्यविधानशोभा तस्योदितासीत्पुनरुक्तदोषा ॥ १४-९

tapasviveṣakriyayāpi tāvat yaḥ prekṣaṇīyaḥ sutarām babhūva |
rājendranepathyaavidhānāśobhā tasyoditāsītpunaruktadoṣā || 14-9

14-9. Lord Ram, who had an innate charm, had looked magnificent while he was attired as a hermit (during his forest exile days), now looked all the more remarkable and many times more attractive during his coronation ceremony, when he was dressed in royal robes and adorned by other royal regalia befitting an Emperor, the King of Kings.

[Note--It is to be noted here that this formal coronation ceremony was conducted in the royal garden on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya. This fact would be clear in the next verse that says that after his coronation, Lord Ram proceeded to enter the city.]

Verse no. 10:

स मौलरक्षोहरिभिः ससैन्यः तूर्यस्वनानन्दितपौरवर्गः।
विवेश सौधोदगतलाजवर्षाम् उत्तोरणामन्वयराजधानीम् ॥ १४-१०

sa maularakṣoharibhiḥ sasainyaḥ tūryasvanānanditapauravargah |
viveśa saudhodgatalājavarṣām uttorañāmanvayarājadhānīm || 14-10

14-10. Accompanied by his senior and elderly ministers and courtiers, as well as his monkey and demon friends (who had come with the Lord aboard the Pushpak plane from Lanka), Lord Ram entered the capital city of Ayodhya with full state honours and observance of royal protocols of his ancestors in keeping with the traditions of the time.

The city had been lively decorated with banners, flags and buntings of different colours and sizes. Rice flakes were being showered from whitewashed homes on the royal procession that brought Lord Ram to the city. And continuous music from trumpets and drums echoed throughout the city to the joy and merriment of its citizens.

Verse no. 11:

सौमित्रिणा सावरजेन मन्दम् आधूतबालव्यजनो रथस्थः।
धृतातपत्रो भरतेन साक्षात् उपायसंघात इव प्रवृद्धः ॥ १४-११

saumitriṇā sāvarajena mandam ādhūtabālavyajano rathasthah |
dhṛtātapatro bharatena sākṣāt upāyasamghāta iva pravṛddhah || 14-11

14-11. Lord Ram sat on a royal chariot, with Laxman and Shatrughan waving fan-like whisks by standing on his two sides, and Bharat holding a ceremonial umbrella on the Lord's head. In this way, when the four brothers entered the city of Ayodhya on the chariot, it looked as if all the four cardinal principles of good and effective governance and tools of political science, such as Sama, Daana, Danda and Bheda¹ have manifested themselves on the same platform.

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 84 of Chapter 10 of Raghuvansham where these four principles have been explained. In this referred verse, the four brothers are likened to the four principles of Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda that are tools used for good and effective governance.]

Verse no. 12:

**प्रासादकालागुरुधूमराजिः तस्याः पुरो वायुवशेन भिन्ना।
वनान्निवृत्तेन रघूत्तमेन मुक्ता स्वयम् वेणिरिवाबभासे ॥ १४-१२**

prāsādakālāgurudhūmarājiḥ tasyāḥ puro vāyuvāśena bhinnā |
vanānnivṛttena raghūttamena muktā svayam veṇirivābabhāse || 14-12

14-12. The black smoke arising from the burning of auspicious 'agar wood' (aloes-wood)¹ that had spread over the buildings of the city, covering it with a dark veil, looked as if after returning from the forest Lord Ram had unlocked the long wavy plaits of hair that had been woven into braids and tied into a bun on the head of the deity of Ayodhya during the period of the Lord's long forest sojourn to coincide with his own matted hairs being opened and shaved at the time of his coronation.

[Note--¹Agar is known as aloes-wood, a resinous wood which gives out a fragrant smoke when burnt. It is used during religious services to offer worship to the deity established on the altar. Its smoke is used in religious practices and during meditation because of its calming properties, and as a scavenger of pollution and for overcoming evil forces.

The deity of Ayodhya was so overjoyed with her Lord Ram's return from forest that as soon as the formal shaving of the Lord's matted hairs was done, she had herself, it seems, untied her bun and unlocked the long strands of her black hairs. Then she danced around in merriment so that her hairs spread over the sky. It was symbolised by the waves of thick black smoke of burning aloes-wood that wafted in the sky, sometimes moving to the right and at other times to the left as the breeze blew.]

Verse no. 13:

**श्वश्रूजनानुष्ठितचारुवेषाम् कर्णैरथस्थाम् रघुवीरपत्नीम्।
प्रासादवातायनदृश्यबन्धैः साकेतनार्योऽञ्जलिभिः प्रणेमुः ॥ १४-१३**

śvaśrūjanānuṣṭhitacāruveṣām kaṇṇairathasthām raghuvīrapatnīm |
prāsādavātāyanadr̥śyabandhaiḥ sāketanāryo'ñjalibhiḥ praṇemuḥ || 14-13

14-13. The women folk of Ayodhya eagerly craned their necks out of their windows and balconies to have a glimpse of Sita, who was seated in a palanquin, and bow to her from their perches in their respective homes. Sita's mothers-in-law had richly attired her in royal robes and adorned her with jewels, giving her a rare royal splendour.

{The palanquin in this case was a royal coach carried on the shoulders of bearers, and used by queens for travel. It was lavishly furnished in the interior, had curtains drawn on its doors and latticed windows, and was decorated with flowers and royal insignia on the outside.}

Verse no. 14:

स्फुरत्प्रभामण्डनमानसूयम् सा बिभ्रती शाश्वतमङ्गरागम्।

रराज शुद्धेति पुनः स्वपूर्ये संदर्शिता वह्निगतेव भर्त्रा ॥ १४-१४

sphuratprabhāmaṇḍanamānasūyam sā bibhratī śāśvatamaṅgarāgam |
rarāja śuddheti punaḥ svapuryai saṁdarśitā vahnigateva bhartrā || 14-14

14-14. Sita's body still had the fragrant and indelible ointment or paste that Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri, had rubbed on her when she visited the sage's wife in the forest. That paste made her skin glow like gold that has been put into the fire, as if Lord Ram had once again made her enter the fire to prove her purity and chastity for the people of Ayodhya.

[Note--The paste applied by Anusuyia was indelible, and it stuck on the skin of Sita ever since. In all probability, it was this ointment or paste that was smeared on her body which helped to protect her purity and dignity when Ravana caught hold of her hands and dragged her onto his chariot to take her to Lanka. It acted like a shield to protect her skin from being touched by another man. It is also probable that this ointment had protected her from being burnt while undergoing the fire test on the battle-field of Lanka. Since this paste had been applied by a great sage's wife, it surely had some mystical abilities in it that was little known by others. Its a truly remarkable thing that the paste survived on Sita's body even after the passage of so long a time. This also shows how highly chemistry and science were evolved during those ancient times.]

Verse no. 15:

वेश्मानि रामः परिबर्हवन्ति विश्राण्य सौहार्दनिधिः सुहृद्भ्यः।

बाष्पायमानो बलिमन्निकेतम् आलेख्यशेषस्य पितुर्विवेश ॥ १४-१५

veśmāni rāmaḥ paribarhavantī viśrāṇya sauhārdanidhiḥ suhṛdbhyaḥ |
bāṣpāyamāno balimanniketam ālekhyasheṣasya piturviveśa || 14-15

14-15. As soon as Lord Ram entered the city, he came to his friends Sugriv and others and asked them to take up residence in well furnished guest houses. Then the Lord went to the palace of his father Dashrath, and entered the room where the king used to live. The Lord entered it with the reverence with which one enters a place of worship, and upon seeing a lone portrait of his dead father, tears rolled down from the eyes of Lord Ram.

Verse no. 16:

कृताञ्जलिस्तत्र यदम्ब सत्यात् नाभश्यत स्वर्गफलाद्गुरुर्नः।
तच्चिन्त्यमानम् सुकृतम् तवेति जहार लज्जाम् भरतस्य मातुः ॥ १४-१६

kr̥tāñjalistatra yadamba satyāt nābhraśyata svargaphalādgururnah |
taccintyamānam sukr̥tam taveti jahāra lajjām bharatasya mātuh || 14-16

14-16. There Lord Ram found Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat and the one who was responsible for the Lord's forest exile, sitting by the side of Dashrath's portrait in a very sad, remorseful and miserable condition¹.

The Lord bowed before her most respectfully, and in order to assure her that he harbours no hard feelings towards her, he spoke to her very politely, saying: "Mother, have no regrets because you had been instrumental in making my father prove that he is steadfast in keeping his promises and upholding his vows, a virtue that has indeed opened the gate for his entry into the heaven. If you had not asked him to prove this quality by insisting he fulfils your demands, then he wouldn't have got a chance to prove to the world that he is truthful to his words of honour and never dishonours his promises even if it meant death for him². Thus, your actions helped to give shine to his character, and therefore there is no cause for you to feel so remorseful."

These polite and softly spoken words of Lord Ram helped to assuage Kaikeyi's grief-stricken heart and soothe her; she felt a bit comforted and reassured.

[Note--¹Kaikeyi had been shunned by everyone in the royal household as well as the public of Ayodhya. After her misdeeds that resulted in her husband's death, and later on when she was sternly rebuked by her own son Bharat who vowed not to see her face for the rest of his life, she was overcome with profound grief and filled with remorse. But nothing could be salvaged by then. No one even bothered to inform her that Lord Ram had come back, for they loathed her and feared that she might create another drama before the coronation of the Lord. Perhaps this was the reason why the coronation of Lord Ram was done in the royal garden outside the city so as to preempt any chance of Kaikeyi playing some foul game at the last moment.

So, Kaikeyi spent her days in the palace of king Dashrath and prayed to his soul to forgive her. This is why Lord Ram found her alone in the king's palace while all others had gone out to welcome him.

²This episode of Kaikeyi asking for boons from her husband king Dashrath and its consequence has been described in detail earlier in Canto 12, verse nos. 4-11 of Raghuvansham.]

Verse no. 17:

तथैव सुग्रीवबिभीषणादीन् उपाचरत्कृत्रिमसंविधाभिः।

संकल्पमात्रोदितसिद्धयस्ते क्रान्ता यथा चेतसि विस्मयेन ॥ १४-१७

tathaiva sugrīvabibhīṣaṇādīn upācaratkṛtrimasamvidhābhiḥ |
samkalpamātroditasiddhayaste krāntā yathā cetasi vismayena || 14-17

14-17. After visiting Kaikeyi, Lord Ram went to the rest houses to meet his friends Sugriv, Vibhishan and others to see if they were comfortable and well looked after. His friends were amazed that whatever they wished to have was presented to them in a very short time.

Verse no. 18:

सभाजनायोपगतान्स दिव्यान् मुनीन्पुरस्कृत्य हतस्य शत्रोः।

शुश्राव तेभ्यः प्रभवदि वृत्तम् स्वविक्रमे गौरवमादधानम् ॥ १४-१८

sabhājanāyopagatānsa divyān munīnpuraskṛtya hatasya śatroḥ |
śuśrāva tebhyaḥ prabhavādi vṛttam svavikrame gauravamādadhānam
|| 14-18

14-18. After that, Lord Ram welcomed sage Agastya and others who had come to meet the Lord, as well as to wish him for his successful return and coronation. The Lord welcomed them and showed due respect to them. Then the Lord heard from sage Agastya the full historical account of Ravana, from his birth till the time of his death, a story in which the Lord too was involved as it was he who had been instrumental in the death of the mighty demon king. This story enhanced the glory and fame of Lord Ram as he had accomplished something that even the gods had failed to achieve, i.e. bring an end to Ravana and his reign of terror.

Verse no. 19:

प्रतिप्रयातेषु तपोधनेषु सुखादविज्ञातगतार्थमासान्।

सीतास्वहस्तोपहृताग्र्यपूजान् रक्षःकपीन्द्रान्विससर्ज रामः ॥ १४-१९

pratiprayāteṣu tapodhaneṣu sukhādavijñyātagatārdhamāsān |
sitāsvahastopahr̥tāgryapūjān rakṣaḥkapīndrānvisasarja rāmaḥ || 14-19

14-19. When the sages (Agastya etc.) had departed, Lord Ram bid farewell to his monkey and demon friends (led by Sugriv and Vibhishan respectively) who were so happy and comfortable while living in the city under the patronage of the Lord that half a month had passed without them even being aware of the time¹. At the time of their departure, Sita herself brought gifts and other paraphernalia to honour them (and thank them for all that they had done for her).

[Note--¹This verse clearly says that Lord Ram had returned to Ayodhya about half a month ago from the date he bid farewell to his friends. At the time of their departure, the Lord promised them abiding friendship and told them that they were welcome anytime they wished to visit him in the future. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16-to Doha no. 17-a; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 20.

Meanwhile, the time mentioned in this verse is 'half a month; a fortnight', but in Ram Charit Manas it is six months--refer: Uttar Kand, Doha no. 15.]

Verse no. 20:

तच्चात्मचिन्तासुलभम् विमानम् हृतम् सुरारेः सह जीवितेन।

कैलासनाथोद्वहनाय भूयः पुष्पम् दिवः पुष्पकमन्वमंस्त ॥ १४-२०

taccātmacintāsulabham vimānam hr̥tam surāreḥ saha jīvitena |
kailāsanāthodvahanāya bhūyaḥ puṣpam divaḥ puṣpakamanvamamsta ||
14-20

14-20. Thereafter, Lord Ram instructed the Pushpak plane, which derived its name from the word 'pushpa', meaning a flower, because it was very attractive and so magnificent that it was like a flower from the heavens, to return home to Kuber, its original owner (before Ravana snatched it from the latter)¹.

This plane had the unique ability to come to the service of those who wished to have it, and it had come to Lord Ram after the death of Ravana (because the Lord had so wished, as he had to go to Ayodhya in a very short time, and the air route was the only option left, as going by land would have taken a very long time)².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4-b. In this version of the story of Lord Ram, the Pushpak was ordered to return home to Kuber as soon as Lord Ram landed in Nandigram, on the outskirts of Ayodhya.

²According to Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 117, Vibhishan had loaded the Pushpak plane with gems and priceless jewels from his treasury, and presented them to Lord Ram as a gift. At that time, however, the Lord asked Vibhishan to go to the sky and shower everything on the ground so that monkeys and bears would take whatever they wished to have as a reward-gift as well as for the sake of memorabilia. When the time came for departure from Lanka, Lord Ram used this plane because he did not have much time left in hand, as the fourteen years of his forest exile was to end shortly, and if he did not return by that time, Bharat wouldn't live. This is clearly stated in Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116.

But when it is said that the plane went to the service of those who wished to have it, it also means, by inference, that if the Lord needed the Pushpak plane in the future, it would come to him by his merely making a wish.]

Verse no. 21:

पितुर्नियोगाद्वनवासमेवम् निस्तीर्य रामः प्रतिपन्नराज्यः।

धर्मार्थकामेषु समाम् प्रपेदे यथा तथैवावरजेषु वृत्तिम् ॥ १४-२१

piturniyogādvanaavāsamevam nistīrya rāmaḥ pratipannarājyaḥ |
dharmārthakāmeṣu samām prapede yathā tathāivāvarajeṣu vṛttim || 14-21

14-21. In this way, after obeying his father's words by spending fourteen years in the forest, Lord Ram came back to retrieve his crown and be anointed as the king of the kingdom of Ayodhya. The Lord practiced an exemplary level of equanimity and equity in all his dealings--whether it be with the three pillars of life represented by Dharma, Artha and Kaam¹, or with his dealing with his three brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, all of whom he treated alike, without distinction or favour.

[Note--¹The three cornerstones of a man's life are (i) Dharma--to follow the principles of good conduct, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety; (ii) Artha--financial well-being, including generation of wealth and its judicious use; and (iii) Kaam--fulfilment of desires and wishes, which imply having good and noble desires, and wishing to do good to others.]

Verse no. 22:

सर्वासु मातुष्वपि वत्सलत्वात् स निर्विशेषप्रतिपत्तिरासीत्।

षडाननापीतपयोधरासु नेता चमूनामिव कृत्तिकासु ॥ १४-२२

sarvāsu mātusvapi vatsalatvāt sa nirviśeṣapratipattirāsīt |
ṣaḍānanāpītapayodharāsu netā camūnāmiva kṛttikāsu || 14-22

14-22. Just as Lord Kartikeya, the commander of the army of gods, had six nurses called 'Kritikas'¹ whose breasts he would suckle simultaneously so that all the nurses would feel equally satisfied that he had not distinguished between them, nor preferred one over the other, so likewise Lord Ram showed his love and affection to all his three mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) equally, without distinguishing between them, nor favouring one over the other.

{To wit, Lord Ram treated all his three mothers equally as a result of which all of them reciprocated his gestures in equal terms and with equal warmth.}

[Note--¹After Kartikeya's birth, the six Kritikas had acted as his foster mothers who nursed and raised him. The six Kirtikas are represented by the six stars of the third lunar mansion. It is after the Kritikas that Lord Kartikeya got his name. This cluster of six stars is called 'Pleiades' in modern astronomy; it is one of the clusters that make up the constellation called 'Taurus'.

In order to suck milk from the breast of all his six nurses, the Kritikas, Lord Kartikeya assumed six heads. This is why he is often called 'Shadanan'--one with six heads.]

Verse no. 23:

तेनार्थवान् लोभपराङ्मुखेन तेन घ्नता विघ्नभयम् क्रियावान्।
तेनास लोकः पितृमान्विनेत्रा तेनैव शोकापनुदेव पुत्री ॥ १४-२३

tenārthavān lobhaparāṅmukhena tena ghnatā vighnabhayam kriyāvān |
tenāsa lokaḥ pitṛmānvīnetrā tenaiva śokāpanudeva putrī || 14-23

14-23. {This verse describes briefly how Lord Ram ruled over his kingdom.}

Lord Ram was extremely generous and magnanimous by nature; he had no greed nor any desire to put his subjects to any kind of financial difficulties. So therefore, he did not impose any tax on his subjects, as a result of which the people began to become wealthy and prosperous.

The Lord ensured that there was no kind of obstacle or hindrance of any kind in any sphere of life, as a result of which the people could undertake their religious pursuits and perform various fire sacrifices with great ease, and as a reward or consequence of this the gods were always happy and they liberally blessed everyone in Ayodhya.

Lord Ram always advised his people to follow the path that was good and correct, a path that was in accordance to the principles of Dharma, i.e. a path that was auspicious, righteous, proper, noble and universally good, as a result of which everyone treated him like they would treat their own father and teacher.

Since the Lord would help anyone who was in need, treating his subjects as his children, so therefore the subjects held him in high esteem, and reciprocated the Lord's gesture by treating him with the same affection and respect as a son or daughter would treat his or her parent.

[Note--Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 28-to Doha no. 30; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43-to Doha no. 47.]

Verse no. 24:

स पौरकार्याणि समीक्ष्य काले रेमे विदेहाधिपतेर्दुहित्रा।
उपस्थितश्चारु वपुस्तदीयम् कृत्वोपभोगोत्सुकयेव लक्ष्म्या ॥ १४-२४

sa pauraḥkāryāṇi samīkṣya kāle reme videhādhīpaterduhitṛā |
upasthitaścāru vapustadīyam kṛtvopabhogotsukayeva lakṣmyā || 14-24

14-24. After fulfilling his duties as the king during the day, Lord Ram would retire to his palace to spend some time in private with Sita who would show great respect and love for the Lord, and it appeared that the deity of Ayodhya was so satisfied and happy with the

Lord's work that she had herself assumed the form of Sita to show her affection to the Lord as a reciprocal gesture to appreciate his efforts to affectionately rule the subjects of his kingdom.

Verse no. 25:

तयोर्यथाप्रार्थितमिन्द्रियार्थान् आसेदुषोः सद्यसु चित्रवत्सु।
प्राप्तानि दुःखान्यपि दण्डकेषु संचिन्त्यमानानि सुखान्यभूवन् ॥ १४-२५

tayoryathāprārthitamindriyārthān āseduṣoḥ sadmasu citravatsu |
prāptāni duḥkhānyapi daṇḍakeṣu saṁcintyamānāni sukhānyabhūvan || 14-25

14-25. The two, i.e. Lord Ram and Sita, lived happily in their palace on the walls of which hung portraits of their days in the forest. By seeing these pictures they would remember those sweet days that they spent alone in the forest, and many a times talked about those memorable events that they experienced while in the forest. Those memories did not cause any grief or pain to them, for they enjoyed remembering those days happily.

Verse no. 26:

अथाधिकस्निग्धविलोचनेन मुखेन सीता शरपाण्डुरेण।
आनन्दयित्री परिणेतुरासीत् अनक्षरव्यञ्जितदोहदेन ॥ १४-२६

athādhikasnigdha vilocanena mukhena sītā śarapāṇḍureṇa |
ānandayitrī pariṇeturāsīt anakṣaravyañjitadohadena || 14-26

14-26. Then, as time passed, Sita exhibited external signs of pregnancy. Her face became as pale as the leaves of a plant known as 'Sarpatta'¹, while her eyes too acquired a yellowish tinge and appeared a little bit shy yet more charming than before.

These obvious signs of her pregnancy made Lord Ram very happy.

[Note--¹Sarpatta is a reed known as 'Sarpatta reed', or 'rattan reed' or 'Arundo donax' reed. The stem of the plant resembles sugarcane with a pale yellow colour. The leaves resemble that of a bamboo plant. Its flowers stalks are pale brown too. It is used in traditional Indian medicine system to improve quality of breast milk in a lactating woman, and its latex is used as a paste over sensitive skin with a burning sensation.]

Verse no. 27:

तामङ्कमारोप्य कृशाङ्गयष्टिम् वर्णान्तराक्रान्तपयोधराग्राम्।
विलज्जमानाम् रहसि प्रतीतः पप्रच्छ रामाम् रमणोऽभिलाषम् ॥ १४-२७

tāmaṅkamāropya kṛśāṅgayaṣṭim varṇāntarākṛāntapayodharāgrām |
vilajjamānām rahasi pratītaḥ papraccha rāmām ramaṇo'bhilāṣam || 14-27

14-27. When Lord Ram was certain that Sita had indeed become pregnant, he would lovingly caress his bashful wife and made her sit on his lap. Sita had become lean and thin, and her breast and nipples had changed their colour and texture. Lord Ram would ask her what she wanted during pregnancy, and promised her that all her desires would be fulfilled.

Verse no. 28:

सा दष्टनीवारबलीनि हिंस्रैः संबद्धवैखानसकन्यकानि।
इयेष भूयः कुशवन्ति गन्तुम् भागीरथीतीरतपोवनानि ॥ १४-२८

sā daṣṭanīvārabalīni hīmsraiḥ sambaddhavaikhānasakanyakāni |
iyeṣa bhūyaḥ kuśavanti gantum bhāgīrathītīratapovanāni || 14-28

14-28. Sita expressed her desire that she wished to visit once more the hermitages of sages who lived on the banks of river Ganges where thatched cottages made of kusha reed are present in abundance wherein live hermitresses and their daughters whom she had met and befriended earlier during her journey to the forest with the Lord. The aura around these hermitages is so holy and pious that even ferocious, flesh-eating carnivorous animals have abandoned their natural habits, and have turned into harmless herbivores who eat plants such as reeds, grass and stems to survive.

Verse no. 29:

तस्यै प्रतिश्रुत्य रघुप्रवीरः तदीप्सितम् पार्श्वचरानुयातः।
आलोकयिष्यन्मुदितामयोध्याम् प्रासादमभ्रंलिहमारुरोह ॥ १४-२९

tasyai pratiśrutya raghupravīraḥ tadīpsitam pārśvacarānuyātaḥ |
ālokaṇiṣyanmuditāmayodhyāṁ prāsādamabhrāṁlihamāruroha || 14-29

14-29. Lord Ram assured her that he would certainly fulfil her desire to go and visit these hermitages once again. After that, the Lord took along his attendants and went to the terrace of his mansion, which was so tall that it almost touched the clouds in the sky, in order to view the landscape and the skyline of the charming city of Ayodhya and its outskirts as far as the eyes could see.

Verse no. 30:

ऋद्धापणम् राजपथम् स पश्यन् विगाह्यमानाम् सरयूम् च नौभिः।
विलासिभिश्चाध्युषितानि पौरैः पुरोपकण्ठोपवनानि रेमे ॥ १४-३०

rddhāpaṇam rājapatham sa paśyan vigāhyamānām sarayūm ca naubhiḥ |
vilāsibhiścādhyuṣitāni pauraiḥ puropakaṇṭhopavanāni reme || 14-30

14-30. From the terrace of his majestic palace, Lord Ram could descry the streets of the city lined with shops full of merchandise of all sorts, the Saryu river where colourful boats plied up and down to ferry passengers and entertain those who wished to take a pleasure ride on the river, as well as the many well-kept gardens and public parks where people were enjoying themselves, and having a good time in merrymaking, dancing and singing.

Verse no. 31:

स किंवदन्तीम् वदताम् पुरोगः स्ववृत्तमुद्दिश्य विशुद्धवृत्तः।
सर्पाधिराजोरुभुजोऽपसर्पम् पप्रच्छ भद्रम् विजितारिभद्रः ॥ १४-३१

sa kiṁvadantīm vadatām purogaḥ svavṛttamuddiśya viśuddhavr̥ttaḥ |
sarpādhirājorubhujo'pasarpam papraccha bhadram vijitāribhadraḥ || 14-31

14-31. Pleased and contented by the pleasant sight of Ayodhya that he saw, Lord Ram-- who was eloquent in his speech, who was righteous, honourable and noble by his innate nature, who had long arms and muscular thighs like that of Seshnath's (the celestial serpent's) body, and who was a vanquisher of enemies-- asked Bhadramukha, one of his trusted spies (or intelligence officer, or an officer of the secret service): "Say Bhadra, what do the citizens say about me. {Tell me the truth without fear; it will remain confidential. I assure you that there would be no retribution against either you or the person who might be speaking something negative about me. But as a ruler, I must have the feel of the pulse of the subjects so that I can take remedial measures if I am in the wrong. I don't want that my subjects should harbour any ill-will or mistrust for me. I must ensure that my image is clean.}"

Verse no. 32:

निर्बन्धपृष्टः स जगाद सर्वम् स्तुवन्ति पौराश्चरितम् त्वदीयम्।
अन्यत्र रक्षोभवनोषितायाः परिग्रहान्मानवदेव देव्याः ॥ १४-३२

nirbandhapṛṣṭaḥ sa jagāda sarvam stuvanti paurāścaritam tvadīyam |
anyatra rakṣobhavanoṣitāyāḥ parigrahānmānavadeva devyāḥ || 14-32

14-32. The spy remained silent for a while. But when Lord Ram politely repeated his question many times, Bhadramukha replied: "My honourable Lord! You are like a personified form of a god in a human form! There is no doubt that the people in general have a great opinion of you and are very appreciative of you. They eulogise your virtues and laud your characters; they hold you in high esteem and feel honoured to by your subjects. But there is one thorn that sticks out--and it is this: there is a general feeling that

since Sita was in the custody of the demon king Ravana for a long time, it was not good for you to accept her as your wife. {To wit, the people speak in hush-hush tones about the propriety of accepting a lady as one's wife after she had spent a long time with another man.} ¹"

[Note--¹Its a great irony of fate that though Sita had proved her purity and chastity by undergoing the 'fire-test' in front of the monkeys and bears and demons on the battle-field of Lanka before Lord Ram had accepted her, the Lord still had to hear this slanderous accusation. But on close scrutiny one would observe that the citizens themselves could not be solely blamed for this situation. The reason is that no one from Ayodhya was present in Lanka when Lord Ram put Sita through the fire-test. If there was no necessity for it, then why did the Lord make her do it? What to talk of the citizens, even the Lord himself harboured reservations about her purity as proved by his ordering her to undertake the fire-test. So how can he now become angry with his citizens for the same doubt which he himself had?

But now it was too late; even those who had witnessed it, i.e. the demons led by Vibhishan, and the monkeys and bears led by Sugriv, Angad and Jamvant, had gone home after the Lord bid them farewell. Had they been present, the Lord would have called a full court and make them swear about their witnessing Sita's fire-test in Lanka. But that opportunity was also lost.

Punishing the persons who were making such allegations would send a wrong signal down the rank and file of his subjects--they would murmur and gossip silently that their doubts were indeed credible as Lord Ram feared putting Sita to a fire-test to prove her innocence, so he had become vengeful.

But the question arises, why did Lord Ram not put Sita to a second fire-test? We must remember that she was now pregnant, and who would predict and take a guarantee that the child in her womb would not be harmed by the heat of the raging fire if Sita was forced to undertake the fire-test once again. Besides this, queens never appeared in full public view as a routine matter of royal protocol. And making Sita take the fire-test openly meant a spectacle where hundreds of people would assemble, which obviously would violate her dignity and self-respect. Further, it would embolden mischievous elements to say something else about both Lord Ram and Sita, as well as other members of his family, and this vicious cycle would have no end.

So the Lord thought that it would be better to cap this nasty thing once and for all right now.]

Verse no. 33:

कलत्रनिन्दागुरुणा किलैवम् अभ्याहतम् कीर्तिविपर्ययेण।

अयोघनेनाय इवाभितप्तम् वैदेहिबन्धोर्हृदयम् विदद्रे ॥ १४-३३

kalatranindāguruṇā kilaivam abhyāhatam kīrtiviparyayeṇa |

ayoghanenāya ivābhitaptam vaidehibandhorhṛdayam vidadre || 14-33

14-33. Hearing such wild and unfounded allegations, which were truly false and patently baseless, the heart of Lord Ram, the protector of Sita and her dignity, honour and self-respect, was torn asunder and shattered to pieces just like a hot piece of iron is crushed and splintered or broken into pieces when hit by a large hammer by an iron-smith.

Verse no. 34:

किमात्मनिर्वादकथामुपेक्षे जायामदोषामुत संत्यजामि।

इत्येकपक्षाश्रयविकलवत्वात् आसीत्स दोलाचलचित्तवृत्तिः ॥ १४-३४

kimātmanirvādakathāmupekṣe jāyāmadōṣāmuta saṁtyajāmi |
ityekapakṣāśrayaviklavatvāt āsītsa dolācalacittavṛttiḥ || 14-34

14-34. The Lord pondered over the matter seriously and came to the conclusion that now two options were left before him--either he should neglect such wild and baseless talk, and turn a deaf ear towards it, or he should abandon Sita for the rest of his life, with nothing to do with her in future.

Lord Ram was torn apart in this dilemma, not able to decide what to do in the present circumstance. {His mental condition was like a swing or a pendulum of a clock, swinging to and fro, and oscillating between the two options.}

Verse no. 35:

निश्चित्य चानन्यनिवृत्ति वाच्यम् त्यागेन पत्न्याः परिमार्ष्टुमैच्छत्।

अपि स्वदेहात्किमुतेन्द्रियार्थात् अशोधनानाम् हि यशो गरीयः ॥ १४-३५

nīścitya cānanyanivṛtti vācyam tyāgena patnyāḥ parimārṣṭumaicchat |
api svadehātkimutendriyārthāt aśodhanānām hi yaśo garīyaḥ || 14-35

14-35. After serious thought, the Lord came to the conclusion that the only way to bring an end to this outright slander and falsehood was to abandon his wife Sita for all times to come (as it was impossible for him to stop tongues from wagging). This is because for an upright and honourable man, his immaculate reputation, his self-respect and dignity matter more than anything else in this world, and no other consideration, no other suffering or sacrifice, including abandonment of one's wife, should come in the way of ensuring this¹.

[Note—¹In this connection, refer also to Canto 15, verse no. 61 where we read that when Lord Ram performed the horse sacrifice and the need arose to have his wife alongside him to complete the formalities of the ritual, he had a golden image of Sita made to symbolise her physical presence. The learned reader of this book is advised to read my note appended to the referred verse to understand the full import of Lord Ram's decision.

I am quoting it here for easy reading, especially because the matter is relevant here too: 'Lord Ram was extremely conscientious about his conduct and was very careful

about being on the right side of Dharma, so as to ensure that not a single subject of his kingdom or elsewhere could raise a finger against him and his upright nature. So when he had heard some evil gossip doing the rounds amongst his own subjects concerning his wife Sita, he was astonished, dismayed and dumbfounded. He could have easily summoned that mischief monger and summarily punished him for his unsubstantiated, false and audacious accusations, but since he loved his subjects like a father loves his children, and at the same time also realised that he could not suppress popular voice or view by repressive means by punishing an individual as it would do more harm than good to his own reputation, the Lord decided to remove the very cause of this cancerous hush-hush talk by sending Sita away, or literally discarding her even though he was absolutely sure she was pure, loyal, chaste and immaculate as was proved in the battle-field of Lanka itself when the Lord had asked her to prove her purity by undergoing the ‘fire-test’. {Refer: (a) Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chanda line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 109; (b) Valmiki Ramayan, Yuddha Kand, Chapter 116; and (c) Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto nos. 12-13.}

But as has been observed in verse no. 32 herein above, the irony was that no one from Ayodhya was a witness to this fire-test as it was done in far-away Lanka. Obviously this situation paved the way for gossip and tongue-in-cheek remarks, and the subjects could be excused for such wild accusations because, honestly, they were completely ignorant of the reality that Sita had already proved her purity by the fire-test.

When Lord Ram deeply pondered over this aspect of the matter, he realised his own mistake of not getting the fire-test done in Ayodhya before his subjects. Hence, since it was his own error of judgement, he thought it prudent not to punish the gossip, and instead banish Sita to a safe place under the guardianship of the senior sage Valmiki.

Insofar as that was done, it was alright. But when the Lord did the Aswamedha Yagya or the horse sacrifice, as was required of him owing to his status as a great king and emperor of the realm, the need arose to have his wife alongside him to complete the formalities of the ritual. The only way out was to have an image of Sita by his side. That Lord Ram did so with a heavy heart, and instead of marrying someone else on this pretext that a wife was needed to complete the rituals proved how loyal he was to Sita, and how diligent he was to uphold the haloed tradition of having only one wife in one’s lifetime.]

Verse no. 36:

स संनिपत्यावरजान्हतौजाः तद्विक्रियादर्शनलुप्तहर्षान्।

कौलीनमात्माश्रयमाचक्षे तेभ्यःपुनश्चेदमुवाच वाक्यम् ॥ १४-३६

sa saṁnipatyāvarajānhataujāḥ tadvikriyādarśanaluptaharṣān |

kaulīnamātmāśrayamācākṣe tebhyaḥ punaścedamuvāca vākyaṁ || 14-36

14-36. Saddened and distraught Lord Ram summoned his younger brothers who were stunned to see the Lord in such a distressed state of mind. Then the Lord informed them about the slanderous gossip that was doing the round about him. The Lord said to them--

Verse no. 37:

राजर्षिवंशस्य रविप्रसूतेः उपस्थितः पश्यत कीदृशोऽयम्।

मत्तः सदाचारशुचेः कलङ्कः पयोदवातादिव दर्पणस्य ॥ १४-३७

rājarṣivamśasya raviprasūteḥ upasthitaḥ paśyata kīdrśo'yam |
mattaḥ sadācāraśuceḥ kalaṅkaḥ payodavātādiva darpaṇasya || 14-37

14-37. {Lord Ram felt so dismayed and distressed in his heart when he heard the above bit of alarming information that he lamented at the bad reputation that would stain his otherwise immaculate and stellar character in the eyes of his subjects and the world at large.}

He shared his feelings of dejection and sadness with his brothers, saying: "Look, what kind of stain has occurred on my character and reputation (kalaṅkaḥ) in the form of the evil report that I hear now. It has cast a serious ignominy and raised a question of propriety and righteousness on my esteemed family which has been renowned down the ages as being very steadfast in upholding and adhering to the principles of righteousness, propriety, immaculacy of character, judiciousness, wisdom and uprightness, and for goodness in every sphere of life, public and personal.

I belong to an exalted and ancient family descending from great kings who have been recognised as being a family of 'Rajarshis' (rājarṣivamśasya), literally meaning 'kings and their descendants who were no less than great sages and seers in their level of enlightenment, wisdom, self-discipline, compassion, magnanimity, integrity, and possessing the grand old virtues of dispassion, goodness of spirit, piety of soul, auspiciousness, et al'.

They were literally 'sagely kings' who had descended from the Sun God (raviprasūteḥ), and hence inherited all the glories, greatness, radiance and splendour characteristic of the Sun God. {The members of the exalted family of great kings to which Lord Ram belonged were therefore called members of the 'Solar Race'.}

Say, what an ignominy, disgrace, humiliation and shame (kalaṅkaḥ) it is for me that such an exalted family's great reputation and honour should be tarnished because of me? What a horrible situation has destiny created for us? {Indeed, this kind of nasty and unsubstantiated gossip sullies my reputation, brings a bad name to me and my honourable family, casts aspersions on my character as well as that of my chaste, loyal and righteous wife Sita, and taints us for all times to come. This situation is simply not tenable and acceptable by any measure of imagination.}

It is just like the case of a clean mirror getting suddenly spoiled or blurred by the layer of sticky dust that settles on its clean surface to smear it when a dust-and-moisture laden air (breeze or wind) blows over the mirror in a sultry weather, leaving a dirty layer of moistened dust on the mirror's surface to ruin its cleanliness.

Verse no. 38:

पौरैषु सोऽहम् बहुलीभवन्तम् अपाम् तरंगेष्विव तैलबिन्दुम्।
सोढुम् न तत्पूर्वमवर्णमीशे आलानिकम् स्थाणुरिव दिवपेन्द्रः ॥ १४-३८

paureṣu so'ham bahulībhavantam apām taramgeṣviva tailabindum |
soḍhum na tatpūrvamavarṇamīśe ālānikam sthāṇuriva divpendraḥ || 14-38

14-38. Just like currents in the water spread drops of oil over a wide area, so likewise this single nasty allegation about me will slowly spread all over the city, and is sure to reach even far-flung areas of the realm. I am unable to cope with this first example of slander and taint on my reputation just like a powerful elephant would find the first instance of it being put in shackles too much for it to tolerate (and the elephant would pull and push with all its might to get itself freed from this bondage).

Verse no. 39:

तस्यापनोदाय फलप्रवृत्तौ उपस्थितायामपि निर्व्यपेक्षः।
त्यक्षामि वैदेहसुताम् पुरस्तात् समुद्रनेमिम् पितुराज्ययेव ॥ १४-३९

tasyāpanodāya phalapravṛttau upasthitāyāmapi nirvyapekṣaḥ |
tyakṣāmi vaidehasutām purastāt samudranemim piturājñyayeva || 14-39

14- 39. At the present time though Sita's pregnancy is about to mature and a child is to be born soon, yet in order to clean this horrible taint on my name and clear my reputation it is expedient for me take necessary corrective measures immediately to prevent the issue from snow-balling into a major controversy. {Say, when my sons grow up and hear about this nasty scandal, what would they think, and what negative effective would it have on their psyche?}

Hence, I must overcome emotions and overlook personal attachments with Sita in order to protect my honour by abandoning her immediately just like I had abandoned the attractions of the crown and forgone my right over the vast realm stretching upto the ocean in order to obey my father's words (that I ought to proceed to the forest forthwith).

Verse no. 40:

अवैमि चैनामनघेति किंतु लोकापवादो बलवान्मतो मे।
छाया हि भूमेः शशिनो मलत्वेन आरोपिता शुद्धिमतः प्रजाभिः ॥ १४-४०

avaimi caināmanagheti kimtu lokāpavādo balavānmato me |
chāyā hi bhūmeḥ śaśino malatvena āropitā śuddhimataḥ prajābhiḥ || 14-40

14-40. I know fully well that Sita is taintless and impeccable; she's absolutely upright and immaculate in character. But what the world says behind my back, though absolutely false and baseless, must be weighed by me in order to have a clean public image,

specially when I am a king who must remain above board in all matters of probity and propriety, giving no one any chance to raise a finger against me.

It is like the case of the lunar eclipse when it is actually the shadow of the earth falling on the full moon shining brightly in the sky to make it look dark for some time, but people falsely, and out of their ignorance, say that the moon has lost its shine and covered by darkness because of some of its own fault or sin it had done in the past, or that a demon named Rahu has devoured and thereby polluted it. {There is no such thing at all. The fact is that the moon remains the same and its disc is not at all affected or distorted in size in any way whatsoever, but it appears to be reduced in size and ultimately becomes dark solely because of the earth's shadow falling on it. But still the world casts aspersions on the moon and says it is an inauspicious event for it, although it is plain and simple a physical celestial phenomenon. How can the 'shadow' of the earth dirty the moon? It is sheer nonsense, but who would listen to rationale talk?}

[Note--Lord Ram says that when the people can cast aspersions on the moon by saying it is an inauspicious moment for it when there is a lunar eclipse because the demon Rahu has devoured the moon to spit it out later, thereby polluting it, whereas there is no such thing happening at all because the darkness of the moon is only a temporary phenomenon and actually caused due to some celestial alignment when the shadow of the earth falls on the moon's surface, and not due to some demon devouring it, so then what is the wonder that the same people would say nasty and negative things about him and Sita out of their sheer ignorance, with scant attention to the truth, and the consequence their nonsensical and distasteful gossip would have on their reputation, honour and good name.]

Verse no. 41:

रक्षोवधान्तो न च मे प्रयासो व्यर्थः स वैरप्रतिमोचनाय।

अमर्षणः शोणितकाङ्क्षया किम् पदा स्पृशन्तम् दशति दिवजिह्वः ॥ १४-४१

rakṣovadhānto na ca me prayāso vyarthaḥ sa vairapratimocanāya |
amarṣaṇaḥ śoṇitakāṅkṣayā kim padā spr̥śantam daśati dvijihvaḥ || 14-41

14-41. Now if someone says that since I had to finally abandon Sita because she lived in the custody of the demon king Ravana, then what was the use or the need of waging such a bloody war and kill so many demons just in order to free her, for I could have let her go then itself to maintain peace, avoid bloodshed, so much hardship and suffering, and come to terms with my fate peacefully as I have decided to do now.

Well, the answer to it is that I had to free her by hook or by crook because she was kidnapped against her wish, and it was a challenge for me and my manliness. How could I let Sita be snatched from me when I was supposed to be her protector. Wouldn't neglecting her at that point of time make me look a coward, someone who runs away from his duties and responsibilities? So therefore, I had to wage a war and kill Sita's enemies to protect her as well as my own honour, self-respect and dignity.

I had been challenged and my honour trampled upon when my wife was taken away forcibly from my custody, literally from under my nose. It was like the case of a

ferocious serpent who had been stepped upon by someone, whereupon the serpent would lunge forward to bite and kill the person who has trampled upon it in order to seek revenge. Had the person not stepped on the serpent, the latter would not have bitten him. The serpent bites the man to take revenge and not to drink his blood. So likewise, I killed the demons to take revenge for abducting an innocent Sita against her wish, specially when she wailed and pleaded that I rescue her from her captors, and I did not spill the blood of the demons just for the fun it."

Verse no. 42:

तदेष सर्गः करुणार्द्रचित्तैः न मे भवद्भिः प्रतिषेधनीयः।

यद्यर्थिता निर्हृतवाच्यशल्यान् प्राणान्मया धारयितुम् चिरम् वः ॥ १४-४२

tadeṣa sargaḥ karuṇārdracittaiḥ na me bhavadbhiḥ pratiṣedhaniyāḥ |
yadyarthitā nirhṛtavācyaśalyān prāṇānmayā dhārayitum ciram vaḥ || 14-42

14-42. {Addressing his brothers, Lord Ram further said--} "Therefore, if you wish that I survive by removing this arrow symbolising the scandalous accusation on my character, then please have mercy on me and overcome the compassion that you have for Sita in your hearts, by heeding my request, and not opposing it. It is because I would prefer to die than live with such an ignominy on my head."

Verse no. 43:

इत्युक्तवन्तम् जनकात्मजायाम् नितान्तरूक्षाभिनिवेशमीशम्।

न कश्चन भ्रातृषु तेषु शक्तो निषेद्धमासीदनुमोदितुम् वा ॥ १४-४३

ityuktavantam janakātmajāyām nitāntarūkṣābhiniveśamīśam |
na kaścana bhrātr̥ṣu teṣu śakto niṣeddhumāśīdanumoditum vā || 14-43

14-43. When Lord Ram disclosed his stern decision pertaining to Sita, none of his brothers either had the courage to prohibit him from carrying out his decision, nor could they give their consent or approve of it. {All the three brothers of Lord Ram were speechless and stunned. They could neither approve nor disapprove Lord Ram. A moment of deathly silence followed.}

Verse no. 44:

स लक्ष्मणम् लक्ष्मणपूर्वजन्मा विलोक्य लोकत्रयगीतकीर्तिः।

सौम्येति चाभाष्य यथार्थभाषी स्थितम् निदेशे पृथगादिदेश ॥ १४-४४

sa lakṣmaṇam lakṣmaṇapūrvajanmā vilokya lokatrayagītakīrtiḥ |
saumyeti cābhāṣya yathārthabhāṣī sthitam nideśe pṛthagādideśa || 14-44

14-44. When Lord Ram, who was renowned in the world for being true to his words and a fulfiller of his wish, observed that only Laxman showed signs of obeying his wish without asking questions (whereas the other two brothers stood very saddened, with bowed heads, showing remorse and a quiet disapproval of the Lord's decision), he gestured to Laxman to step forward and took him aside.

Verse no. 45:

प्रजावती दोहदशंसिनी ते तपोवनेषु स्पृहयालुरेव।

स त्वम् रथी तद्व्यपदेशनेयाम् प्रापय्य वाल्मीकिपदम् त्यजैनाम् ॥ १४-४५

prajāvatī dohadaśamsinī te tapovaneṣu spr̥hayālureva |
sa tvam rathī tadvyapadeśaneyām prāpayya vālmikipadam tyajainām ||
14-45

14-45. Lord Ram told Laxman: "Your pregnant sister-in-law Sita had expressed her wish to me sometimes ago that she has a desire to once again visit the hermitages of sages which she had first visited during our journey to the forest (and I had promised her that her wish would be fulfilled)¹. So therefore, in order to satisfy her desire, please take her on a chariot to a place very close to sage Valmiki's hermitage and leave her there.

{She will have no suspicion because it was her own wish. This way I will have an excuse to send her away from me without any hue and cry, and as far as her security and safety is concerned, who else is more able and competent than the great sage Valmiki to take care of her? She will be safe and well looked after. This will also ensure that she is not left alone in the wilderness to fend for herself, as it would be a very cruel thing to do to an innocent lady. By this method, my reputation would be saved, and at the same time Sita would also be safe and secure in the forest. So, there is nothing to worry.}

[Note--¹Refer to verse nos. 28-29 herein above.]

Verse no. 46:

स शुश्रुवान्मातरि भार्गवेन पितुर्नियोगात्प्रहृतम् दिवषद्वत्।

प्रत्यग्रहीदग्रजशासनम् तत् आरुया गुरुणां ह्यविचारणीया ॥ १४-४६

sa śuśruvānmātari bhārgavena piturniyogātprahṛtam dviṣadvat |
pratyagrahīdagrajaśāsanam tat ājñyā gurūṇāṃ hyavicāraṇīyā || 14-46

14-46. Laxman was aware of the legend that sage Parashuram had killed his own mother when his father had asked him to do so. So, he agreed to carry out his elder brother Lord Ram's instructions because one should always obey one's elders, without asking questions. {No sin would accrue to a person if he obeys the orders of his elders. The sin, if any, would accrue to the person who gives the order, and not to the person who is

simply obeying such orders, because otherwise disobedience in itself is not a good thing.}

Verse no. 47:

अथानुकूलश्रवणप्रतीता मत्रस्नुभिर्युक्तधुरम् तुरंगैः।

रथम् सुमन्त्रप्रतिपन्नरश्मिम् आरोप्य वैदेहसुताम् प्रतस्थे ॥ १४-४७

athānukūlaśravaṇapratītā matrasnubhiryuktadhuram turāṅgaiḥ |
ratham sumantrapratipannaraśmim āropya vaidehasutām pratasthe || 14-47

14-47. When Sita heard that Laxman was taking her to visit the hermitages of sages, she was very happy. Laxman took her on a chariot that was driven by Sumantra, the royal charioteer. The horses were so well trained, and moved so smoothly and efficiently, that the chariot always remained steady on its path, without undue shaking or experiencing any jerk, thereby making Sita feel very comfortable during the journey.

Verse no. 48:

सा नीयमाना रुचिरान्प्रदेशान् प्रियंकरो मे प्रिय इत्यनन्दत्।

नाबुद्ध कल्पद्रुमताम् विहाय जातम् तमात्मन्यसिपत्रवृक्षम् ॥ १४-४८

sā nīyamānā rucirānpradeśān priyamkaro me priya ityanandat |
nābuddha kalpadrumatām vihāya jātam tamātmanyasipatravṛkṣam || 14-48

14-48. While passing through rich and verdant countryside, Sita was overjoyed by the sounds and sights of the forest. She felt happy that her husband loved her so much that he would always fulfil her desires just like the Kalpa Tree that fulfils one's desire when a person makes a wish before it. {She had expressed her wish to visit the hermitages, as well as see the countryside and the forests enroute, and the Lord immediately arranged for it.}

But it was so sad and unfortunate for Sita that she was unaware that the same Lord had become so stern and stone-hearted like a tree known as 'Asiptra'¹ that has leaves with edges as sharp as a sword that would cut a person if touched carelessly. {To wit, Sita was oblivious that this journey would end with great grief for her for as long as she lived. She was unaware that the Lord has abandoned her.}

[Note--¹There is no specific tree with this name on earth, but in ancient mythological texts it refers to the 'sword-tree' found in hell. As compared to soft leaves of other trees, this tree of hell hurts anyone who dares to touch it as its leaves are razor-sharp and meant to torment condemned souls.]

Verse no. 49:

जुगूह तस्याः पथि लक्ष्मणो यत् सव्येतरेण स्फुरता तदक्षणा।
आख्यातमस्यै गुरु भावि दुःखम् अत्यन्तलुप्तप्रियदर्शनेन ॥ १४-४९

jugūha tasyāḥ pathi lakṣmaṇo yat savyetareṇa sphuratā tadakṣṇā |
ākhyātamasyai guru bhāvi duḥkham atyantaluṣṭapriyadarśanena || 14-49

14-49. Laxman had not disclosed to Sita anything about the gloom and grief that was to come to her soon, but the flickering of the right eyelids of Sita had indicated to her that something ominous was to happen.

[Note--It is believed that if a woman's right eyelids begin to flicker or throb, then something bad is about to happen. The opposite applies to a male--i.e. a man's left eyelids flickering or throbbing means something bad is in the offing for him.]

Verse no. 50:

सा दुर्निमित्तोपगतादिविषादात् सद्यःपरिम्लानमुखारविन्दा।
राज्यः शिवम् सावरजस्य भूयादित्य् आशशंसे करणैरबाहयैः ॥ १४-५०

sā durnimittopagatādiviṣādāt sadyaḥparimlānamukhāravindā |
rājñyaḥ śivam sāvarajasya bhūyādity āśaśamse karaṇairabāhyaiḥ || 14-50

14-50. As soon as her left eyelids began to throb, she became worried and sad. She prayed that her husband and his three brothers be protected from harm and live happily.

Verse no. 51:

गुरोर्नियोगाद्वनिताम् वनान्ते साध्वीम् सुमित्रातनयो विहास्यन्।
अवार्यतेवोत्थितवीचिहस्तैः जहनोर्दुहित्रा स्थितया पुरस्तात् ॥ १४-५१

gurorniyogādvanitām vanānte sādhvīm sumitrātanayo vihāsyān |
avāryatevotthitavīcihastaiḥ jahnorduhitrā sthitayā purastāt || 14-51

14-51. On the way, they came to the banks of river Ganges whose waves rose high as if waving to Laxman and asking him not to take Sita, who was chaste and loyal to her husband, to the forest to abandon her on the instructions of his elder brother, Lord Ram.

[Note--River Ganges is a holy river, so when it raised its hands in the form of its waves which swayed left and right, to and fro, it appeared that the deity of the river was signalling to Laxman not take Sita to her exile, as she was pure, as the deity itself vouched for it.]

Verse no. 52:

रथात्स यन्त्रा निगृहीतवाहात् ताम् भ्रातृजायाम् पुलिनेऽवतार्य।
गङ्गाम् निषादाहृतनौविशेषः ततार संधामिव सत्यसंधः ॥ १४-५२

rathātsa yantrā nigrhītavāhāt tām bhrātrjāyām puline'vatārya |
gaṅgām niṣādāhṛtanauviśeṣaḥ tatāra saṁdhāmiva satyasandhaḥ || 14-52

14-52. On the sandy banks of the river Ganges, the charioteer stopped the horses and loosened their reins. Laxman helped Sita to step down from the chariot on the sands, and then, true to his words given to Lord Ram that he would drop her on the other side of the river, he summoned a boat and boarded it along with Sita to take her to the other side of the river¹.

[Note--¹When Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had gone to the forest, it was exactly at this place on the banks of river Ganges where he had crossed the river on a boat and asked Sumantra to return home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100; and Doha no. 101 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Lord Ram asked Sita to be dropped on the other side of the river so that she would not be able to walk back to the city of Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 53:

अथ व्यवस्थापितवाक्कथंचित् सौमित्रिरन्तर्गतबाष्पकण्ठः।
औत्पातिकम् मेघ इवाश्मवर्षम् महीपतेः शासनमुज्जगार ॥ १४-५३

atha vyavasthāpitavākkathamcit saumitrirantargatabāṣpakāṇṭhaḥ |
autpātikam megha ivāśmavarṣam mahīpateḥ śāsanamujjagāra || 14-53

14-53. When they reached the other side of river Ganges, Laxman disclosed to Sita what Lord Ram had ordered him to do. At that time, Laxman's voice was choked, and his words felt like hailstones were being rained down on the helpless Sita to batter her physically and emotionally.

Verse no. 54:

ततोऽभिषङ्गानिलविप्रविद्धा प्रभ्रश्यमानाभरणप्रसूना।
स्वमूर्तिलाभप्रकृतिम् धरित्रीम् लतेव सीता सहसा जगाम ॥ १४-५४

tato'bhiṣaṅgānilavipraviddhā prabhraśyamānābharanaprasūnā |
svamūrtilābhaprakṛtim dharitrīm lateva sītā sahasā jagāma || 14-54

14-54. Just like the case of flowers and leaves withering and falling down to earth from a creeper when hot gusts of wind strike them during the summer, so likewise Sita collapsed on the ground, and her ornaments slipped from her body and fell alongside her.

Verse no. 55:

इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवः कथम् त्वाम् त्यजेदकस्मात्पतिरार्यवृत्तः।

इति क्षितिः संशयितेव तस्यै ददौ प्रवेशम् जननी न तावत् ॥ १४-५५

ikṣvākuvaṁśaprabhavaḥ katham tvām tyajedakasmātpatirāryavṛttaḥ |
iti kṣitiḥ saṁśayiteva tasyai dadau praveśam jananī na tāvat || 14-55

14-55. At that time, Mother Earth did not open up and embrace Sita to her bosom (i.e. the earth did not split open so that Sita could enter it and vanish forever), because she (Earth) was confused and could not come to terms with the idea that Lord Ram, who was upright, honourable, and always stood for truth, would abandon Sita in this rude way for no fault of hers¹.

[Note--¹Mother Earth doubted that surely there was some kind of misunderstanding or confusion as to why Lord Ram would so suddenly abandon Sita. She thought that perhaps it was a temporary arrangement due to some reason. Had she been sure that Sita has been abandoned for life, Mother Earth would surely have opened her arms to accept her by splitting on its surface and accepting Sita in her embrace by making her sink deep into the bowls of the earth before closing the opening on the surface for good.

It must be remembered that Sita was the daughter of Mother Earth because she was found in a pitcher buried in the ground when king Janak, her worldly father, was ploughing a field as part of a sacrifice he was performing. His plough got stuck, and when the earth was dug, he discovered a newly born beautiful baby girl inside a pitcher. Janak took her and raised her as his own daughter.]

Verse no. 56:

सा लुप्तसंज्ञया न विवेद दुःखम् प्रत्यागतासुः समतप्यतान्तः।

तस्याः सुमित्रात्मजयत्नलब्धो मोहादभूत्कष्टतरः प्रबोधः ॥ १४-५६

sā luptasamjñyā na viveda duḥkham pratyāgatāsuḥ samatapyatāntaḥ |
tasyāḥ sumitrātmajayatnalabdho mohādabhūtkṣṭatarah prabodhaḥ || 14-56

14-56. When Sita fainted, she had become unconscious, and so felt no pain or grief. But when Laxman revived her by sprinkling water on her face, she felt a surge of heart-tearing grief and thought it was well if she had remained unconscious for the rest of her life, for in that condition at least she won't have to bear with the torment of unbearable pain and grief (of separation from Lord Ram, for no fault of hers).

Verse no. 57:

न चावदद्भर्तुर्वर्णमार्या निराकरिष्णोर्वृजिनादृतेऽपि।
आत्मानमेवम् स्थिरदुःखभाजम् पुनः पुनर्दुष्कृतिनम् निनिन्द ॥ १४-५७

na cāvadadbharturavarṇamāryā nirākariṣṇorvrjinādr̥te'pi |
ātmānamevam sthiraduḥkhabhājam punaḥ punarduṣkṛtinam nininda || 14-57

14-57. Sita had such a highly honourable and exemplarily noble character, as well as a pious soul, that inspite of being subjected to such a rude abandonment and an ignoble treatment by her husband (Lord Ram), she did not even mutter any harsh words for him, neither did she grumble or express anger or resentment against him. On the contrary, she cursed her own self and her Atma (soul), as well as her doomed fate, for the ill tidings, the misery, the grief and the pain she has had to face.

Verse no. 58:

आशवास्य रामावरजः सतीम् ताम् आख्यातवाल्मीकिनिकेतमार्गः।
निघ्नस्य मे भर्तृनिदेशरौक्ष्यम् देवि क्षमस्वेति बभूव नमः ॥ १४-५८

āśvāsyā rāmāvarajaḥ satīm tām ākhyātavālmīkiniketamārgaḥ |
nighnasya me bhartṛnideśaraukṣyam devi kṣamasveti babhūva namraḥ ||
14-58

14-58. Lord Ram's younger brother Laxman tried his best to comfort Sita and assuage her troubled heart. He showed her the way to sage Valmiki's hermitage. Then, he folded his hands and said to her with a very heavy heart: "Oh honourable lady, you are like a respected goddess for me (devi). But what can I do as I am duty-bound to obey the orders that have been given to me. So since I am merely carrying out instructions of my elder brother, I sincerely feel sorry and ask for forgiveness from you for my harsh actions."

Verse no. 59:

सीता तमुत्थाप्य जगाद वाक्यम् प्रीतास्मि ते सौम्य चिराय जीव।
बिडौजसा विष्णुरिवाग्रजेन भ्रात्रा यदित्थम् परवानसि त्वम् ॥ १४-५९

sītā tamutthāpya jagāda vākyam prītāsmi te saumya cirāya jīva |
biḍaujasā viṣṇurivāgrajena bhrātrā yadittham paravānasi tvam || 14-59

14-59. Laxman prostrated before Sita to beg forgiveness from her. She affectionately lifted him from the ground and told him: "My honourable gentlemanly son (saumya)! I am pleased with you, and bless you with a long and happy life. You are not at all at fault,

because you are simply obeying the instructions of your elder brother, which is a right thing to do just as Indra's younger brother Lord Vishnu always obeys what his elder brother Indra tells him to do.

Verse no. 60:

श्वश्रूजनम् सर्वमनुक्रमेण विज्ञ्यापय प्रापितमत्प्रणामः।

प्रजानिषेकम् मयि वर्तमानम् सूनोरनुध्यायत चेतसेति ॥ १४-६०

śvaśrūjanam sarvamanukrameṇa vijñyāpaya prāpitamatpraṇāmaḥ |
prajāniṣekam mayi vartamānam sūnoranudhyāyata cetaseti || 14-60

14-60. When you return home, please convey my appropriate respects to all my mothers-in-law and tell them on my behalf that I am bearing their son's (i.e. Lord Ram's) embryo in my womb, so they should bless it and pray for its well-being.

Verse no. 61:

वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा वहनौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम्।

माम् लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किम् तत्सदृशम् कुलस्य ॥ १४-६१

vācyastvayā madvacanātsa rājā vahnau viśuddhāmapi yatsamakṣam |
mām lokavādaśravaṇādahāsīḥ śrutasya kim tatsadṛśam kulasya || 14-61

14.61. Then tell the king (i.e. Lord Ram) on my behalf that he had himself tested my purity and chastity by making me undertake the fire-test (in Lanka, to which Laxman too was a witness). Now therefore, is it proper for you and befitting to your status as a son of a noble dynasty in which you are born that merely on hearing what unscrupulous people are saying you should decide to abandon me for no fault of mine?

[Note—¹Refer to verse nos. 34-35 of this Canto no. 14 in this context.]

Verse no. 62:

कल्याणबुद्धेरथवा तवायम् न कामचारो मयि शङ्कनीयः।

ममैव जन्मान्तरपातकानाम् विपाकविस्फूर्जिथुरप्रसहयः ॥ १४-६२

kalyāṇabuddherathavā tavāyam na kāmācāro mayi śaṅkaniyaḥ |
mamaiva janmāntarapātakānām vipākavisphūrjithuraprasahyaḥ || 14-62

14-62. Verily indeed, you are the one who always does good to others, you always take care of those who are dependant upon you, never harming anyone, and therefore surely

you would not have taken this harsh decision against me if it had not been for my doomed fate and the fruit of some unknown sin that I may have committed in my previous life, which has now struck me like a thunderbolt.

Verse no. 63:

उपस्थिताम् पूर्वमपास्य लक्ष्मीम् वनम् मया सार्धमसि प्रपन्नः।

तदास्पदम् प्राप्य तयातिरोषात् सोढास्मि न त्वद्भवने वसन्ती ॥ १४-६३

upasthitām pūrvamapāsy lakṣmīm vanam mayā sārdhamasi prapannaḥ |
tadāspadam prāpya tayātiroṣāt soḍhāsmi na tvadbhavane vasantī || 14-63

14-63. It appears to me that at the time of our going to the forest you had taken me along but had left behind the deity of the kingdom, known as 'Rajya-Laxmi', which had annoyed the latter much, and she had become jealous of me so much so that when we came back the deity decided to take revenge upon me. She planned my ouster and exile for the second time so that she would have sole power over you, and make you attracted towards her by her services and offerings of royal comforts and pleasures to you.

{Just like two swords can't fit in the same scabbard, so likewise the royal deity decided to eject me so that she can have free and unhindered access to you. By me out of the way, you too will be free to enjoy all the comforts and pleasures she has to offer you.}

[Note--This observation by Sita shows the pain of her heart. She has made sarcastic remarks against Lord Ram in a veiled tone. She primarily says that with her out of the way, the Lord would be able to court other women and enjoy their company. When Laxman conveyed this message to Lord Ram, he must have squirmed in shame and regretted a lot. It is this reason that after Sita's abandonment, Lord Ram led a sad and forlorn life, detached from everything. He never indulged in pleasures of the senses, practiced self-restraint and renunciation. He would go about his duties in a mechanical manner, and spent his time doing Aswamedha Yagya, or the horse sacrifices as if to atone for his mistake and error in decision. Sita chided Lord Ram in different ways, and clearly hinted at the infamy that Lord Ram has brought upon himself by abandoning her. It would be clear as we read on.]

Verse no. 64:

निशाचरोपप्लुतभर्तृकाणाम् तपस्विनीनाम् भवतः प्रसादात्।

भूत्वा शरण्या शरणार्थमन्यम् कथम् प्रपत्स्ये त्वयि दीप्यमाने ॥ १४-६४

niśācaropaplutabhartṛkāṇām tapasvinīnām bhavataḥ prasādāt |
bhūtvā śaraṇyā śaraṇārthamanyam katham prapatsye tvayi dīpyamāne ||
14-64

14-64. During our forest exile, I had given shelter in our hermitage to many pious ladies whose hermit husbands had been subjected to terror by the demons (and so out of fear they came to live with me for protection and safety). Now, tell me, with what face would I go and beg for shelter with them, for all know that I am your queen, and how disgraceful it would be for you (when they come to know why I am seeking shelter in their hermitages).

Verse no. 65:

किंवा तवात्यन्तवियोगमोघे कुर्यामुपेक्षाम् हतजीवितेऽस्मिन्।
स्याद्रक्षणीयम् यदि मे न तेजः तदीयमन्तर्गतमन्तरायः ॥ १४-६५

kiṁvā tavātyantaviyogamoghe kuryāmupekṣām hatajīvite'smin |
syādrakṣaṇīyam yadi me na tejaḥ tadīyamantargatamantarāyaḥ || 14-65

14-65. Had it not been necessary to preserve my embryo that harbours a spark of new life with which you had blessed me, I would have preferred to end this wretched life that has separated me from you; it is not worth living any more.

Verse no. 66:

साहम् तपः सूर्यनिविष्टदृष्टिः ऊर्ध्वम् प्रसूतेश्चरितुम् यतिष्ये।
भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेऽपि त्वमेव भर्ता न च विप्रयोगः ॥ १४-६६

sāham tapaḥ sūryaniviṣṭadrṣṭiḥ ūrdhvam prasūteścaritum yatiṣye |
bhūyo yathā me jananañtare'pi tvameva bhartā na ca viprayogaḥ || 14-66

14-66. Once my son is born, I shall do severe penance by focusing my attention on the sun so that I am further purified, and I shall ask a boon from the sun-god that in my next life I once again become your wife and never be separated from you.

Verse no. 67:

नृपस्य वर्णाश्रमपालनम् यत् स एव धर्मो मनुना प्रतीतः।
निर्वासिताप्येवमतस्त्वयाहम् तपस्विसामान्यमवेक्षणीया ॥ १४-६७

nṛpasya varṇāśramapālanam yat sa eva dharmo manunā pratītaḥ |
nirvāsitāpyevamatastvayāham tapasvisāmānyamavekṣaṇīyā || 14-67

14-67. In ancient time, Manu had classified the society into four segments, and he ordained that the second segment known as the 'Kshatriya' class, to which rulers and kings belong, including yourself, has a primary duty to give protection to and take care of all those who depend upon them or seek their shelter. Since you too belong to this class,

and though you had abandoned me yet I am still one of your subjects, you must take care of me and extend your protection to me, specially because now I shall be living a hermit's life which even the scriptures say must be granted protection and care by a king."

Verse no. 68:

**तथेति तस्याः प्रतिगृह्य वाचम् रामानुजे दृष्टिपथम् व्यतीते।
सा मुक्तकण्ठम् व्यसनातिभारा चक्रन्द विग्ना कुररीव भूयः ॥ १४-६८**

tatheti tasyāḥ pratigrhya vācam rāmānuje dr̥ṣṭipatham vyatīte |
sā muktakaṇṭham vyasanātibhārā ccakranda vīgnā kurarīva bhūyaḥ || 14-68

14-68. When Sita had finished, Laxman promised her that he would convey whatever she has said to Lord Ram. After that, as soon as Laxman went out of sight, Sita was struck with grief and loneliness. Burdened with misery, she burst out crying, wailing and lamenting loudly like a female osprey in great distress.

Verse no. 69:

**नृत्यम् मयूराः कुसुमानि वृक्षा दर्भानुपात्तान्विजहुरहरिण्यः।
तस्याः प्रपन्ने समदुःखभावम् अत्यन्तमासीद्रुदितम् वनेऽपि ॥ १४-६९**

nṛtyam mayūrāḥ kusumāni vṛkṣā darbhānupāttānvijahurharīṇyaḥ |
tasyāḥ prapanne samaduḥkhabhāvam atyantamāsīdruditam vane'pi || 14-69

14-69. Hearing loud wails and lamentations of Sita, the peacocks stopped dancing, the trees shed tears in the form of flowers, and the female deer dropped the blades of grass which they had in their mouths with the intention of eating them. In this symbolic way, the whole forest became gloomy and began to express its solidarity with Sita by joining her in her moment of grief and distress.

Verse no. 70:

**तामभ्यगच्छद्रुदितानुकारी कविः कुशेधमाहरणाय यातः।
निषादविद्धाण्डजदर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः ॥ १४-७०**

tāmabhyagacchadruditanukārī kaviḥ kuśedhmāharaṇāya yātaḥ |
niṣādaiddhāṇḍajadarśanotthaḥ ślokatvamāpadyata yasya śokaḥ || 14-70

14-70. The exalted sage renowned for his sense of mercy for those who are in distress, and who was so moved by the agony of a crane when it was struck by the arrow of a hunter that he composed his first verse in Sanskrit to express his distress¹, i.e. sage Valmiki, was out of his hermitage to collect firewood and kusha grass for his religious

practices. He heard the wails and lamentations of Sita, and followed in the direction from where the sound came, and finally reached her.

[Note--¹The story is this: One day, sage Valmiki went to the banks of river Tamsa with sage Bharadwaj for his daily bath. While leisurely walking along the bank of the river, he observed that an osprey couple, a male and a female, were frolicking around and making love with each other. At that moment a hunter shot the male osprey dead. The female partner wailed and grieved in utter distress. The sight of the distraught female bird's agonised wail and the cruelty of the hunter moved Valmiki so much that he uttered his first verse in a poetic style or meter called 'Anushtup Chanda'. He cursed the hunter and the verse came out in perfect meter of a Sanskrit verse. It said: 'Oh you cruel fowler! May you not have peace of mind forever because you have killed an innocent bird while it was enjoying the pleasures of life with its partner.' {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 15.}

Soon the creator Brahma appeared before him and said that it was because of a divine inspiration that he did so. Brahma then instructed Valmiki to compose the story of Lord Ram in the same metrical style as his first utterance while cursing the fowler. Brahma further promised him that he would ensure that his composition would have no rival or parallel in the world. Since the story of the Ramayana was first written in the form of a poetry by sage Valmiki, he has been called the 'adi-kavi', the first and the primary poet who had composed the epic story of Lord Ram known as the Ramayana. The basic structure of this story was provided to Valmiki by sage Narad. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 43.}

Verse no. 71:

तमश्रु नेत्रावरणम् प्रमृज्य सीता विलापादिवरता ववन्दे।

तस्यै मुनिर्दोहदलिङ्गदर्शी दाश्वान्सुपुत्राशिषमित्युवाच ॥ १४-७१

tamaśru netrāvaraṇam pramrjya sītā vilāpādivratā vavande |
tasyai munirdohadaliṅgadarśī dāśvānsuputrāśiṣamityuvāca || 14-71

14-71. When Sita saw sage Valmiki, she was at once stopped weeping and lamenting, and wiped off the tears that had hitherto clouded her eyes (because she was now assured of protection and safety). She bowed reverentially before the sage who, upon observing signs of her pregnancy, blessed her to the effect that she may have good sons.

[Note--Sita was well acquainted with sage Valmiki as she had met him during her outward journey to the forest with Lord Ram and Laxman. It was this sage who had advised Lord Ram to establish his hermitage at Chitrakoot. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 132.]

Verse no. 72:

जाने विसृष्टाम् प्रणिधानतस्त्वाम् मिथ्यापवादक्षुभितेन भर्त्रा।
तन्मा व्यथिष्ठा विषयान्तरस्थम् प्राप्तसि वैदेहि पितुर्निकेतम् ॥ १४-७२

jāne visr̥ṣṭām praṇidhānatastvām mithyāpavādakṣubhiteṇa bhartrā |
tanmā vyathiṣṭhā viṣayāntarastham prāptāsi vaidehi piturniketam || 14-72

14-72. Sage Valmiki said comfortingly to Sita: "Dear daughter! By the virtue of my spiritual powers and divine intuition I have come to know that your husband (Lord Ram) had abandoned you on false accusations by getting worried about his reputation. Oh Vaidehi (i.e. Sita, daughter of king Vaideha of Janakpur)! Don't worry at all, and treat this place (as well as my hermitage) as an outpost of your father, as one of your father's another home. {Don't grieve and treat me as your father, and rest assured that you would be well cared for.}

Verse no. 73:

उत्खातलोकत्रयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञ्येऽप्यविकत्थनेऽपि।
त्वाम् प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्ता वस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ॥ १४-७३

utkhātalokatrayakaṇṭake'pi satyapratijñye'pyavikatthane'pi |
tvām pratyakasmātkaluṣapravṛttā vastyeva manyurbharatāgraje me || 14-73

14-73. Though Lord Ram is very upright and honourable, though he is committed to eliminate grief and suffering of all the three divisions of world (i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world), though he is very steadfast in upholding his words of honour, and though he never boasts about his achievements and goodness, yet the way he has rudely treated you has ignited anger against him in my heart, and I deeply resent his behaviour.

[Note--It is evident that sage Valmiki was very angry at Lord Ram, and he would have cursed him in the same way as he had once cursed a fowler who shot dead a male crane which caused its female partner grieve and cry inconsolably. This episode is cited in verse no. 70 herein above. But when the sage discovered that Sita was pregnant, he somehow controlled himself and refrained from casting a devastating curse on Lord Ram, as it would have a negative bearing on his offspring who was about to take a birth.]

Verse no. 74:

तवोरुकीर्तिः श्वशुरः सखा मे सताम् भवोच्छेदकरः पिता ते।
धुरि स्थिता त्वम् पतिदेवतानाम् किम् तन्न येनासि ममानुकम्प्या ॥ १४-७४

tavorukīrtiḥ śvaśuraḥ sakhā me satām bhavocchedakaraḥ pitā te |
dhuri sthitā tvam patidevatānām kim tanna yenāsi mamānukampyā || 14-74

14-74. Your famous late father-in-law (king Dashrath) was my friend, and your father (king Janak) is highly enlightened and wise, teaching spiritualism and principles of metaphysics to others so that they can find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and you yourself are foremost amongst women who are chaste, immaculate in character and loyal to their husbands. So therefore, there is no reason why I should not treat you with compassion and mercy (and it is my moral responsibility to help you in times of your distress).

Verse no. 75:

तपस्विसंसर्गविनीतसत्त्वे तपोवने वीतभया वसास्मिन्।

इतो भविष्यत्यनघप्रसूतेः अपत्यसंस्कारमयोविधिस्ते ॥ १४-७५

tapasvisaṁsargaavinītasattve tapovane vītabhayā vasāsmiṇ |
ito bhaviṣyatyanaghaprasūteḥ apatyasaṁskāramayavidhiste || 14-75

14-75. Look around and see that even wild animals have become so tamed and polite by living alongside pious sages and hermits. Neither the sages and hermits nor these animals disturb or harm anyone. You will also stay without any kind of fear in my hermitage, and when your children are born then all their birth rituals and their education would be properly taken care of.

Verse no. 76:

अशून्यतीराम् मुनिसंनिवेशैः तमोनिहन्त्रीम् तमसाम् वगाहय।

तत्सैकतोत्सङ्गबलिक्रियाभिः संपत्स्यते ते मनसः प्रसादः ॥ १४-७६

aśūnyatīrām munisaṁniveśaiḥ tamonihantrīm tamasām vagāhya |
tatsaikatotsaṅgabalikriyābhiḥ saṁpatsyate te manasaḥ prasādaḥ || 14-76

14-76. This Tamsa river has clean and rejuvenating water which dispels sins by bathing in it. Sages and hermits come here for their daily rituals and offering worship to their respective deities. So likewise, you too come here daily to perform your rituals and offer worship to your family deity which would give you peace of mind, make you feel happy and contented, and help you overcome grief.

Verse no. 77:

पुष्पम् फलम् चार्तवमाहरन्त्यो बीजम् च बालेयमकृष्टरोहि।

विनोदयिष्यन्ति नवाभिषङ्गाम् उदारवाचो मुनिकन्यकास्त्वाम् ॥ १४-७७

puṣpam phalam cārtavamāharantyo bījam ca bāleyamakṛṣṭaroḥi |
vinodayiṣyanti navābhiṣaṅgām udāravāco munikanyakāstvām || 14-77

14-77. The young daughters of hermits and sages who live around this place would give you good company. They would bring seasonal fruits and flowers for you, as well as the grains and other things that would be needed for your daily worship rituals. Their sweet talk would keep you engaged and entertained.

{Further, you will be able to enjoy freedom of the countryside and the invigorating environment of the surrounding Nature, something you would have missed in your royal palace with its innumerable restrictions and protocols. Hence, treat this misfortune as a blessing in disguise that has enabled you to break free from shackles, and live a free life of enjoyment amidst the pleasures of Mother Nature.}

Verse no. 78:

पयोघटैराश्रमबालवृक्षान् संवर्धयन्ती स्वबलानुरूपैः।

असंशयम् प्राक्तनयोपपत्तेः स्तनंधयप्रीतिमवाप्स्यसि त्वम् ॥ १४-७८

payoghaṭairāśramabālavṛkṣān saṁvardhayantī svabalānurūpaiḥ |
asaṁśayam prāktanayopapatteḥ stanandhayapṛitimavāpsyasi tvam || 14-78

14-78. Pick up whichever pitchers of water you can comfortably lift and water the plants of the hermitage. This will give you a lot of joy, keep you engaged, and teach you what pleasure there is in watering and tending helpless plants, which in turn would train you to affectionately look after and feed your children till they grow up and can tend for themselves."

{In this way, the fatherly sage Valmiki comforted Sita and removed all her grief. She felt happy and cheerfully accompanied the sage to his hermitage.}

Verse no. 79:

अनुग्रहप्रत्यभिनन्दिनीम् ताम् वाल्मीकिरादाय दयाद्रचेताः।

सायम् मृगाध्यासितवेदिपार्श्वम् स्वमाश्रमम् शान्तमृगम् निनाय ॥ १४-७९

anugrahapratyabhinandinīm tām vālmīkirādāya dayādracetāḥ |
sāyam mṛgādhyāsītavedipārśvam svamāśramam śāntamṛgam nināya || 14-79

14-79. Sita accompanied the tender hearted, compassionate and merciful sage Valmiki to his hermitage. By now it was evening, and she saw an amazing sight that in the hermitage, where the sage had his worship altar, many kinds of animals, such as deer and even lions, had assembled and were lying around lazily with half-closed eyes as if dozing off to sleep.

{After roaming around in the forest during the day, these animals would assemble at the sage's hermitage to pass the night sleeping quietly. This ensured that no other wild animal from some other place would attack the sage during the night. During winters, the fire of the altar would also give warmth to these animals. What a fantastic scene it was indeed! It was a proof of the sage's piety and holiness that even those animals, who by

nature are considered dangerous and flesh-eating predators, would come to lie down around the sage like domesticated pet animals.}

Verse no. 80:

तामर्पयामास च शोकदीनाम् तदागमप्रीतिषु तापसीषु।
निर्विष्टसाराम् पितृभिर्हिमांशोः न्त्याम् कलाम् दर्श इवौषधीषु ॥ १४-८०

tāmarpayāmāsa ca śokadīnām tadāgamapṛītiṣu tāpasīṣu |
nirviṣṭasārām pitṛbhirhimāṁśoḥ ntyām kalām darśa ivauṣadhīṣu || 14-80

14-80. Just like the last remaining fraction of the cool nectar of the moon that is symbolised by its soothing moon-light is stored in the herbs during the night of the dark moon (while the rest of its cool and soothing nectar have been sucked up by different deities during the previous fourteen days from the full moon night till the dark moon night), so likewise sage Valmiki preserved the remnants of Sita's happiness by handing her custody to the ladies of the hermitages (i.e. his own hermitage and those of other sages around his own) so that they can all look after her comfort and make her feel at home collectively).

[Note--Sita's happiness and joys were exhausted when she was abandoned by Lord Ram. But whatever little hope of joy in life that was still left in her heart by the twin prospects of having children and living the rest of her life in some kind of safety was preserved by sage Valmiki when he brought Sita to his hermitage.]

Verse no. 81:

ता इङ्गुदीस्नेहकृतप्रदीपम् आस्तीर्णमेध्याजिनतल्पमन्तः।
तस्यै सपर्यानुपदम् दिनान्ते निवासहेतोरुटजम् वितेरुः ॥ १४-८१

tā iṅgudīśnehakṛtapradīpam āstīrṇamedhyājīnatalpamantaḥ |
tasyai saparyānupadam dinānte nivāsaheṭoruṭajam viteruḥ || 14-81

14-81. After the completion of evening worship rituals, the ladies of the hermitage gave a cottage to Sita to live comfortably. A lamp of oil extracted from the Ingudi tree¹ was burning inside, and the floor was covered by the hide of deer.

[Note--¹The Ingudi tree is called Nagelia Putranjiva. It is a tree whose fruits contain a large percentage of oil which was extracted by ancient sages for use in lamps, and various other house-hold purposes. The fruits were made into and worn as necklace particularly by females as they were supposed to possess life-giving virtues, hence its botanical name. Females wore it so that they can be blessed with children so that the lineage of the sage could be continued.]

Verse no. 82:

तत्राभिषेकप्रयता वसन्ती प्रयुक्तपूजा विधिनातिथिभ्यः।
वन्येन सा वल्कलिनी शरीरम् पत्युः प्रजासंततये बभार ॥ १४-८२

tatrābhiṣekaprayatā vasantī prayuktapūjā vidhinātithibhyaḥ |
vanyena sā valkalinī śarīram patyuh prajāsaṁtataye babhāra || 14-82

14-82. In the hermitage, Sita lived a very pious and regulated life like other female hermits. She would bathe daily in the morning, and would welcome and serve guests who came to visit sage Valmiki. She covered her body with rough jute clothes like other female hermits, and ate very frugal meals consisting of fruits and roots just enough to sustain life in her body so that her child can be born to ensure that her husband's family lineage can continue.

[Note--This kind of life was not new for Sita as she had lived this way for fourteen years of Lord Ram's exile in the forest. So she was very comfortable with it.]

Verse no. 83:

अपि प्रभुः सानुशयोऽधुना स्यात् किमुत्सुकः शक्रजितोऽपि हन्ता।
शशंस सीतापरिदेवनान्तम् अनुष्ठितम् शासनमग्रजाय ॥ १४-८३

api prabhuḥ sānuśayo'dhunā syāt kimutsukaḥ śakrajito'pi hantā |
śaśaṁsa sītāparidevanāntam anuṣṭhitam śāsanamagrajāya || 14-83

14-83. When Laxman returned home to Ayodhya, he told Lord Ram everything that Sita had said to him while weeping bitterly. Laxman wished to see if Lord Ram would regret or remained unmoved about his decision, and whether or not he would make some amends after he heard the way Sita had wailed and lamented pitifully.

Verse no. 84:

बभूव रामः सहसा सबाष्पः तुषारवर्षीव सहस्यचन्द्रः।
कौलीनभीतेन गृहान्निरस्ता न तेन वैदेहसुता मनस्तः ॥ १४-८४

babhūva rāmaḥ sahasā sabāṣpaḥ tuṣāravarṣīva sahasyacandraḥ |
kaulīnabhītena grhānnirastā na tena vaidehasutā manastāḥ || 14-84

14-84. Upon hearing Sita's pitiful message as conveyed by Laxman, tears rolled down Lord Ram's eyes like dew drops during the moon lit nights of the Paush months (i.e. December-January)¹ (indicating that Lord Ram was overwhelmed with sorrow, grief and

regret). This is because he had not abandoned Sita due to any personal grudge, but only to prevent any kind of taint on his character and reputation.

[Note--¹During the cold winter nights, especially during full moon nights, dew forms on the ground and drips from leaves, flowers, grass blades, and covers vast tracts of green fields. Everything becomes moist. Likewise, Lord Ram's eyes shed tears and became moist when he heard Sita's pitiful message.]

Verse no. 85:

निगृह्य शोकम् स्वयमेव धीमान् वर्णाश्रमावेक्षणजागरूकः।

स भ्रातृसाधारणभोगमृद्धम् राज्यम् रजोरिक्तमनाः शशास ॥ १४-८५

nigṛhya śokam svayameva dhīmān varṇāśramāvekṣaṇajāgarūkaḥ |
sa bhrātr̥sādhāraṇabhogamṛddham rājyam rajoriktamanāḥ śaśāsa || 14-85

14-85. Thereafter, Lord Ram became very reserved and lived a life of renunciation. He was wise and sagacious, he upheld the rules of life as ordained for the four segments of the society, known as 'varnashram dharma', by ancient scriptures, and he had no trace of having any kind of desire for sensual pleasures. Along with his brothers, he engaged himself in looking after the affairs of his prosperous kingdom in a judicious manner.

Verse no. 86:

तामेकभार्याम् परिवादभीरोः साध्वीमपि त्यक्तवतो नृपस्य।

वक्षस्यसंघट्टसुखम् वसन्ती रेजे सपत्नीरहितेव लक्ष्मीः ॥ १४-८६

tāmekabhāryām parivādabhīroḥ sādhwīmapi tyaktavato nṛpasya |
vakṣasyasaṅghaṭṭasukham vasantī reje sapatnīrahiteva lakṣmīḥ || 14-86

14-86. With Sita out of the way, it appeared that the female deity of the kingdom came to occupy Lord Ram's heart after he had abandoned his loyal and immaculate wife out of fear of infamy and scandalous gossiping regarding his character. The deity found this vacancy in the Lord's heart, and immediately occupied it to live happily there. {This is why the Lord forgot about Sita and became engaged whole-heartedly in the affairs of the kingdom.}

[Note--Refer verse no. 63 of this Canto 14 herein above.]

Verse no. 87:

सीताम् हित्वा दशमुखरिपुर्नोपमेये यदन्याम्

तस्या एव प्रतिकृतिसखो यत्क्रतूनाजहार।
 वृत्तान्तेन श्रवणविषयप्रापिणा तेन भर्तुः सा
 दुर्वारम् कथमपि परित्यागदुःखम् विषेहे ॥ १४-८७

sītām hitvā daśamukharipurnopameye yadanyām
 tasyā eva pratikṛtisakho yatkratūnājahāra |
 vṛttāntena śravaṇaviṣayaprāpiṇā tena bhartuḥ sā
 durvāram kathamapi parityāgaduhkham viṣehe || 14-87

14-87. After abandoning Sita, Lord Ram did not marry again. On the contrary, he always treated her with the greatest of respect. In fact, during the many Aswamedha Yagya (horse sacrifices) that he performed later on in life, he would keep a golden idol of Sita to his left to represent her as it was necessary that the chief patron of such sacrifices must have his wife with him to make the rituals successful.

When this news reached Sita-- that Lord Ram had not re-married, and that he had a golden idol of Sita sit by his side during the conduct of the rituals of the horse sacrifices-- she felt very relieved and glad that after all the Lord continued to treat her as his wife, that he had not lost his love for her, and that he remained loyal to her as she was to him. This very thought was very reassuring for Sita, and her grief, that had hitherto been intolerable, was now bearable and less tormenting.

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये त्रयोदशः सर्गः

iti kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye tatradyodaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 14th Canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 15, verse nos. 1-105:

{The concluding Canto of the Ramayana of Kalidas.}

Lord Ram did not re-marry after abandoning Sita. One day, sages residing near the river Yamuna came to him and said that a demon named Lavnasur had been tormenting them and creating a hindrance in their religious practices; they sought help from the Lord against this nuisance. Lord Ram sent his younger brother Shatrughan to take care of the matter. Lord Ram blessed his brother and asked him to stop-over at hermitages of sage that fall on his way and find out about their welfare.

Shatrughan spent the first night at sage Valmiki's hermitage where the sage extended warm hospitality to him. On the same night, Sita gave birth to her twin sons. Shatrughan was mightily pleased at this news. The next day, he took leave of the sage and proceeded on his journey.

When Shatrughan reached the city of Madhuvan, just at that time Lavnasur, who was the son of Ravana's sister Kumbhinas, had returned after hunting wild animals. Shatrughan observed that the demon had no weapon in his hands at that moment as he held dead animals with both his hands. So, Shatrughan thought it was a good opportunity, and he attacked Lavnasur. A fierce duel took place between the two, but ultimately Shatrughan slayed the demon and sent him to hell.

The sages who had asked protection from this demon were very pleased, and they profusely blessed Shatrughan. Thereafter, he established a city called Mathura on the banks of river Yamuna where noble and honourable people came to live in peace.

Meanwhile, sage Valmiki, being a friend of kings Dashrath and Janak, attended to Sita like a father would attend to his daughter after her two sons were born. The sage performed all the rituals and necessary religious duties to baptise the two sons in a proper and systematic way. The sage had used the hairs at the end of the tail of a cow to clean the newly born first child, and he had used kusha grass to do the same for the second child. This is why he named the first and the elder son as 'Lava', and the second son as 'Kusha'.

Though the two sons were born immediately one after the other, and the sage had to get them cleaned almost simultaneously, so the question as to who was elder is difficult to answer precisely. Some accounts say that Lava was elder, while others say Kusha was elder. But according to Kalidas' version, it is clear that Lava was born a few seconds earlier than Kusha. {Refer verse no. 32.}

When the two boys grew up under the care of the compassionate sage Valmiki, he taught them all aspects of the scriptures and religious doctrines, as well as martial art. The sage also taught them the story of the Ramayana that he himself had written as part of their education in literature as well as to make them aware of their noble lineage. The boys would sing the story of the Ramayana as taught to them by the sage before their mother to entertain her and keep her amused.

While returning to Ayodhya, Shatrughan skipped the sage's hermitage to avoid giving him trouble. He reached Ayodhya and told Lord Ram everything about the success of his assignment. The Lord was very pleased. But Shatrughan did not tell the Lord anything about the birth of his two sons in the hermitage of sage Valmiki because the sage had asked him not to do so, saying that when the right time comes he would himself go and hand over the two sons to Lord Ram.

After the passage of some time, Lord Ram performed a horse sacrifice. Since it was not proper to conduct this ritual without the presence of his wife by his side, the great sages and learned scholars who had assembled at the venue advised that a golden idol of Sita be used to represent her.

Meanwhile, the two young brothers, Lava and Kusha, learnt the story of the Ramayana by heart as taught to them by sage Valmiki, their teacher, and they would roam around singing in melodious tune the verses of the epic. Their singing was absolutely charming, and with their attire of hermit-sons, they captivated the mind and imagination of people wherever they went. This news reached the ears of Lord Ram. The Lord called them and listened to their song with rapt attention in a full court. The simple hermit like attire of the two boys, their charming appearance, and their heart-touching rendering of the story of the Ramayana mesmerised Lord Ram as well as all those who were present there. The Lord was stunned at the resemblance that the two boys had with

him, except that they were attired like forest dwellers and were young, while the Lord was dressed in royal robes and was an adult. When the two boys politely returned the gift or the reward that Lord Ram gave them, it astonished everyone.

When the Lord enquired from them who was their teacher, who taught them this singing, who had composed the verses they were singing, the two innocent children replied that it was sage Valmiki.

Lord Ram took all his other brothers along and went to meet sage Valmiki. After formal greetings, the sage told him that the two boys were his own sons, and now he should accept Sita along with her sons. Lord Ram replied: "Oh revered sage! Sita had already undergone the fire-test to prove her purity in Lanka itself, but the subjects of my kingdom don't believe it because of Ravana's corrupt reputation. So therefore, if Sita can once again prove her purity and innocence by undergoing another test, I am ready to accept her and her two sons."

Sage Valmiki went to Lord Ram's court the next day along with Sita and the two brothers, Lava and Kusha. The entire court was struck with shame and grief that they had falsely accused this honourable and upright lady with something so abhorable and condemnable as impurity of character, disloyalty and dishonesty.

Sage Valmiki instructed his disciples to bring a little water of the holy river Ganges and a small tuft of kusha grass. He then told Sita: "My daughter, prove your integrity and purity before this whole court to set at rest all misgivings and controversies for all times to come."

To obey the sage's instructions, Sita opened her palms and filled it with water of the Ganges while holding the tuft of the kusha grass in her fingers. She then made a solemn pledge: "If I had never broken my vows of remaining loyal to my husband, and had never ever violated chastity, integrity, purity and immaculacy of character, then oh Mother Earth, please accept me in your laps by opening a way for me so that I can disappear in your bowls forever."

No sooner had Sita made this proclamation then the earth opened up, and a splendorous throne emerged from its bowls with the deity representing Mother Earth herself sitting on it. The deity welcomed Sita on her lap, and immediately the throne sank into the earth, and the hole on the surface through which it had appeared closed for all times to come.

Somehow, Lord Ram completed the ongoing horse sacrifice and bid everyone goodbye. Lord Ram assigned Bharat the kingdom of Sindhu. Bharat vanquished the gandharvas and split the kingdom into two, giving his two sons, named Taksha and Pushkal, the two newly formed kingdoms that now onwards would bear their names.

On the instructions of Lord Ram, Laxman made his two sons, named Angad and Chitraketu, the rulers of Karapatha. {Shatrughan had already been assigned the kingdom of Mathura.}

One day, Kaal, the deity representing the end of one's life in this world, came to Lord Ram and requested the Lord to return to his original abode in the heaven, called Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu. So therefore, to prepare for his final exit from this world, Lord Ram assigned Kusha the kingdom of Kushaawati, and Lava the kingdom of Sharaawati.

Obeying their father, Lava and Kusha kept the sacred fire in the forefront and went in the northern direction to take charge of their new assignment. Meanwhile, Lord

Ram, along with all his brothers, went to the banks of river Saryu, took a final bath in it, and ascended to heaven on a divine plane.

This is the summary of Canto 15, and it also brings to an end the story of the Ramayana as narrated by Kalidas, the famed classical poet of India, in Cantos 10-15 of his composition known as 'Raghuvansham'.

Now, let us start with our reading of the original text as follows:

Verse no. 1:

कृतसीतापरित्यागः स रत्नाकरमेखलाम्।

बुभुजे पृथिवीपालः पृथिवीमेव केवलाम्॥ १५-१

kr̥tasītāparityāgaḥ sa ratnākaramekhalām |
bubhuje pṛthivīpālāḥ pṛthivīmeva kevalām|| 15-1

15-1. After abandoning Sita, Lord Ram, the king and the protector of the land surrounded by the ocean, began ruling over his vast realm and enjoying the comforts and pleasures that were inherent to his stature as the King-Emperor of the world, but he did not marry again.

Verse no. 2:

लवणेन विलुप्तेज्यास्तामिस्रेण तमभ्ययुः।

मुनयो यमुनाभाजः शरण्यम् शरणार्थिनः॥ १५-२

lavaṇena viluptejyāstāmisreṇa tamabhyayuh |
munayo yamunābhājaḥ śaraṇyam śaraṇārthinaḥ|| 15-2

15-2. During this time, one day a group of sages and ascetics who lived on the banks of river Yamuna, came to meet Lord Ram who was a protector of all, and invariably gave his support to those who came to seek refuge with and sought his help. These sages were being tormented by a demon called 'Lavnasur'¹, who routinely defiled their religious rituals and prevented them from pursuing their spiritual practices.

[Note--¹Lavnasur was the son of Ravana's sister Kumbhinasi and a daughter of the demon Madhu. Madhu had performed severe penance by which Lord Shiva was so highly pleased with him that he gave him a trident which possessed the power of turning to ashes anything which it touched. This special power that Madhu's son Lavnasur possessed by the virtue of inheriting his grandfather's trident has been clearly referred to by sages and ascetics in verse no. 5 herein below--when they told Lord Ram that as long as this demon holds this particular trident it is impossible to kill him.]

Verse no. 3:

अवेक्ष्य रामम् ते तस्मिन्न प्रजहुः स्वतेजसा।
त्राणाभावे हि शापास्त्राः कुर्वन्ति तपसो व्ययम्॥ १५-३

avekṣya rāmam te tasminna prajahruḥ svatejasā |
trāṇābhāve hi śāpāstrāḥ kurvanti tapaso vyayam|| 15-3

15-3. When the sages and ascetics saw Lord Ram sitting on the throne, and knew him to be ever-ready to help and protect them whenever the need arose, they decided not to employ their own spiritual powers and mystical abilities to punish the demon Lavnasur by casting their curse on the latter.

They desisted from doing so because they were well aware that each time they would curse someone for any reason whatsoever, the accumulated merits of their long spiritual practices, penances and austerities would get diminished in proportion to the intensity and the effect of the curse cast by them on the offender. So therefore, wise and erudite sages and ascetics would use their abilities and powers to punish their tormentors by cursing them as rarely as possible, and only in cases of emergencies when they found that there was no one to give them respite or protection.

In the present case, since they had Lord Ram there to help and protect them, it was thought prudent not to fritter away or waste their spiritual energy by casting a curse on the demon, and instead to leave the task on Lord Ram¹. [15-3]

[Note—¹Wise and enlightened sages, ascetics and saints do not want to unnecessarily fritter away or waste their spiritual powers and mystical abilities acquired after hard penance and austerities if their aim or objective can be achieved by an alternative means. In this case, when they saw Lord Ram, who was a great protector of sages and holy men, as well as of everything that was pious, holy and righteous, was sitting on the throne, they desisted from employing their own powers to punish the demon. Their wish to refrain from using their own spiritual powers to punish the concerned demon in the presence of Lord Ram also stemmed from their wish not to undermine Lord Ram's authority and reputation as a protector of sages and holy men, for if they went ahead to curse the demon then obviously it would mean that they had no confidence in Lord Ram and his abilities, and that would be a very embarrassing situation. It would be tantamount to insulting Lord Ram and damage his reputation.

Another reason for the sages hesitating or demurring to intervene personally themselves to punish the offender is that with each curse they cast upon the latter, their spiritual powers and mystical abilities got diminished in proportion to the intensity of their curse. It is like the case of someone's reserve fund; if the person uses it unwisely and for unimportant things then his fund would get diminished slowly. Then later on, if he actually lands in trouble and needs funds to tide over his misfortunes, then he would be left high and dry. Hence, they were very particular and cautious in using their powers and abilities. Therefore, wise sages would usually employ their super-natural powers judiciously and with due care, and only in case when they found that there is no alternative available to them to deal with the situation would they intervene.]

Verse no. 4:

प्रतिशुश्राव काकुत्स्थस्तेभ्यो विघ्नप्रतिक्रियाम्।
धर्मसंरक्षणार्थेव प्रवृत्तिर्भुवि शार्ङ्गिणः॥ १५-४

pratiśuśrāva kākutsthastebhyo vighnapratikriyām |
dharmaśaṁrakṣaṇārtheva pravṛttirbhuvī śāṅgiṇaḥ|| 15-4

15-4. Lord Ram told them not to worry, and promised them that he would eliminate the cause of their troubles and remove the obstacles that they face in pursuing their religious practices, because Lord Vishnu had manifested himself on this earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the demons, offer protection to those who are righteous, noble and pious, and establish the law of Dharma on the land.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 5:

ते रामाय वधोपायमाचख्युर्विबुधद्विवशः।
दुर्जयो लवणः शूली विशूलः प्रार्थयतामिति॥ १५-५

te rāmāya vadhopāyamācakhyurvibudhadviṣaḥ |
durjayo lavaṇaḥ śūlī viśūlaḥ prārthyatāmiti|| 15-5

5-5. The sages and ascetics told Lord Ram the means of slaying the demon Lavnasur, saying that this demon holds a deadly trident (śūlī viśūlaḥ), and as long as this weapon is in his hand it is well nigh impossible to kill him¹. So therefore, in order to kill him he must be attacked at a time when the trident is not in his hand.

[Note--¹The reason has been outlined as a note of verse no. 2 herein above.]

Verse no. 6:

आदिदेशाथ शत्रुघ्नम् तेषाम् क्षेमाय राघवः।
करिष्यन्निव नामास्य यथार्थमरिनिग्रहात्॥ १५-६

ādideśātha śatrughnam teṣām kṣemāya rāghavaḥ |
kariṣyanniva nāmāśya yathārthamarinigrahāt|| 15-6

15-6. After that, Lord Ram called his younger brother Shatrughan and assigned to him the task of eliminating the torment of the sages and ascetics by eliminating the demon

Lavnasur. The Lord wanted to prove that his brother is true to his name 'Shatrughan', i.e. one who is a vanquisher of enemies.

[Note--Why did Lord Ram select Shatrughan for this job? The answer is given in this verse itself--i.e. the Lord wanted to show to the world that his brother is true to his name, a vanquisher of enemies.]

Verse no. 7:

**यः कश्चन रघूणाम् हि परमेकः परंतपः।
अपवाद इवोत्सर्गम् व्यावर्तयितुमीश्वरः॥ १५-७**

yaḥ kaścana raghūṇām hi paramekah paramtapah |
apavāda ivotsargam vyāvartayitumīśvaraḥ|| 15-7

15-7. Just as in the field of Sanskrit grammar there are found certain exceptions to the general rule of grammar where the latter fails to become applicable, so likewise amongst all the rulers of the world, the descendants of the Raghu's dynasty stood out like an exception, because whereas other rulers were susceptible to being defeated by a powerful enemy, but no enemy was so powerful that members of Raghu's dynasty could not vanquish or subdue single-handedly.

[Note--As a general rule, during a duel between two powerful adversaries, there was no certainty who would win. But the descendants of the Raghu's dynasty stood out as an exception to this general rule as it was certain that in any such combat they were sure to win.]

Verse no. 8:

**अग्रजेन प्रयुक्ताशीस्ततो दाशरथी रथी।
ययौ वनस्थलीः पश्यन्पुष्पिताः सुरभीरभीः॥ १५-८**

agrajena prayuktāśīstato dāśarathī rathī |
yayau vanasthalīḥ paśyanpuṣpitāḥ surabhīrabhīḥ|| 15-8

15-8. Having received his elder brother's instructions and blessings, Shatrughan, the son of king Dashrath, mounted a magnificent chariot and proceeded ahead to complete his assignment. On the way he viewed the greenery of the surrounding countryside with its verdant forests, trees bearing fragrant flowers, and lush green fields.

Verse no. 9:

रामादेशादनुगता सेना तस्यार्थसिद्धये।
पश्चादध्यनार्थस्य धातोरधिरिवाभवत्॥ १५-९

rāmādeśādanugatā senā tasyārthasiddhaye |
paścādadhyanārthasya dhātoradhirivābhavat|| 15-9

15-9. The army that followed Shatrughan in accordance with the orders of Lord Ram was superfluous and not actually needed because he alone was enough to subdue and conquer the mightiest of enemies. It is like the case of a prefix 'adhi' that is attached to the word 'gyan' as it seems superfluous because the word for knowledge, i.e. 'gyan', in itself is sufficient to explain what is being aimed to achieve, and there is no special need to attach any prefix to it to highlight its meaning.

[Note--There are primarily two types of knowledge--viz. Adhi-bhautic which pertains to the gross world visible around us on the earth, and Adhi-daivic which pertains to the subtle world of the Gods which is not visible. In both these words, the prefix 'adhi' seems unnecessary because the root word that follows it itself refers to knowledge, albeit of different fields.

So likewise, there was no need of the army to accompany Shatrughan as he himself was competent enough to vanquish the demon Lavnasur.]

Verse no. 10:

आदिष्टवर्त्मा मुनिभिः स गच्छंस्तपसाम् वरः।
विरराज रथप्रष्टैर्वालखिल्यैरिवांशुमान्॥ १५-१०

ādiṣṭavartmā munibhiḥ sa gacchāṁstapasām varah |
virarāja rathapraṣṭhairvāḥkilyairivāṁśumān|| 15-10

15-10. Just as great sages known as 'Valyakhilya'¹ precede the chariot of the Sun-God from the front, so likewise the sages and ascetics who came to seek help from Lord Ram showed Shatrughan the path to be followed by leading him from the front.

[Note--The Valyakhilya sages in Hinduism are a group of tiny sages, about the size of a thumb, but very powerful in their spiritual power and asceticism which they had achieved by severe penance. They are associated with the sun, travelling alongside it to give the Sun-God protection.]

Verse no. 11:

तस्य मार्गवशादेका बभूव वसतिर्यतः।
रथस्वनोत्कण्ठमृगे वाल्मीकीये तपोवने॥ १५-११

tasya mārḡavaśādekā babhūva vasatiryataḥ |
rathasvanotkanṭhamṛge vālmikīye tapovane|| 15-11

15-11. While Shatrughan was on his way, he came to sage Valmiki's hermitage where he made his first night's halt. The deer of the hermitage stood up and stretched out their necks in amazement when they heard the sound of the chariots of his army as they arrived at the hermitage.

{The area surrounding sage Valmiki's hermitage was calm and peaceful. So the sudden clamour caused by the sound of arriving chariots of Shatrughan's army, with the neighing of horses and the clattering of wheels, surprised the resident animals who were not accustomed to such loud noises. They stood up alarmed and astonished, raising their ears and stiffening their necks to stare in the direction from which the army arrived. But soon they relaxed when they discovered that those who came did not mean any harm to them, but were friendly in nature.}

Verse no. 12:

तमृषिः पूजयामास कुमारम् क्लान्तवाहनम्।
तपःप्रभावसिद्धाभिर्विशेषप्रतिपत्तिभिः॥ १५-१२

tamṛṣiḥ pūjayāmāsa kumāram klāntavāhanam |
tapaḥprabhāvasiddhābhirviśeṣapratipattibhiḥ || 15-12

15-12. The horses and soldiers of Shatrughan's army were tired, so he thought it prudent to give them a bit of rest for the night by making a halt at sage Valmiki's hermitage. {Besides this, it was also proper to pay a courtesy visit to the sage while he was passing that way, and enquire about his sister-in-law Sita's well-being.}

Sage Valmiki used his mystical powers to arrange all things necessary for hosting Shatrughan and his army. So they were made comfortable and well looked after during their night halt at the sage's hermitage¹.

[Note--¹Ancient sages had this kind of supernatural power that they could create any kind of luxurious settings to entertain their guests lavishly, miraculously as if out of thin air. This is evident in another context when Bharat visited sage Bharadwaj's hermitage en-route to Chitrakoot to meet Lord Ram and try to convince him to return home and accept the crown. He was accompanied by a huge company of people including soldiers and other wings of the army, royal family members, the royal priest sage Vashistha, ministers and courtiers, servants and goods carriers, etc. When they made a night halt at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, the sage invoked his mystical powers to extend a warm and lavish hospitality to everyone, providing for their lavish lodging, sumptuous food, and all other necessities of life which astonished everyone because the sage himself lived a very simple and frugal way of life, and to arrange for such a lavish reception was nothing short of a miracle. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 212-to Doha no. 215.]

Verse no. 13:

तस्यामेवास्य यामिन्यामन्तर्वन्ती प्रजावती।

सुतावसूत संपन्नौ कोशदण्डाविव क्षितिः॥ १५-१३

tasyāmevāsya yāminyāmantarvanti prajāvatī |
sutāvasūta saṁpannau kośadaṇḍāviva kṣitiḥ|| 15-13

15-13. During the same night when Shatrughan was staying at sage Valmiki's hermitage, his sister-in-law Sita gave birth to two glorious and wonderful sons just like the deity of the earth produces wealth and prosperity as well as sustains a successful army for a noble king who rules over the land in an honourable manner.

[Note--We shall read in due course that though Shatrughan knew that Sita had given birth to two sons, he did not inform Lord Ram about them when he returned to Ayodhya after successfully completing his assignment of eliminating the demon Lavnasur. It is because sage Valmiki had told him not to inform Lord Ram about the birth of his two sons. Refer verse no. 41 herein below.]

Verse no. 14:

संतानश्रवणाद्भ्रातुः सौमित्रिः सौमनस्यवान्।

प्राञ्जलिर्मुनिमामन्त्र्य प्रातर्युक्तरथो ययौ॥ १५-१४

saṁtānaśravaṇādbhrātuḥ saumitriḥ saumanasyavān |
prāñjalirmunimāmantrya prātaryuktaratho yayau|| 15-14

15-14. When Shatrughan heard of the two sons being born to his brother Lord Ram, he felt very happy and gratified. The next day, he held the palms of his folded hands together and bowed before sage Valmiki to take his leave, and proceeded on his onwards journey.

Verse no. 15:

स च प्राप मधूपघ्नम् कुम्भीनस्याश्च कुक्षिजः।

वनात्करमिवादाय सत्त्वराशिमुपस्थितः॥ १५-१५

sa ca prāpa madhūpaghnam kumbhīnasyāśca kukṣijah |
vanātkaramivādāya sattvarāśimupasthitaḥ || 15-15

15-15. At the time when Shatrughan reached the city of Madhuvan (also known as Madhupvan; 'madhūpaghnam'), the demon Lavnasur, who was the son of Ravana's sister Kumbhinasī, had just returned with a lot of animals that he had killed as game in

the forest, dangling from both his hands. It appeared that these games had been collected by him as tax from the deity of the forest (*vanātkara*), and therefore he did not wish to leave behind even a single game even though both his hands were full of dead animals.

{Both his hands were full of dead animals as he had heaped all the game and lifted them in his two hands because he was so greedy that he did not wish to leave behind even a single carcass, leaving no space for him to carry his own weapon, the trident.}

Verse no. 16:

धूमधूम्रो वसागन्धी ज्वालाबभ्रुशिरोरुहः।

क्रव्याद्गणपरीवारश्चिताग्निरिव जंगमः॥ १५-१६

dhūmadhūmro vasāgandhī jvālābabhruśīroruhaḥ |
kravyādganaṇaparīvāraścitāgniriva jaṅgamaḥ || 15-16

15-16. Lavnasur's complexion was like a dark cloud; stench of raw flesh emanated from his body; the unkempt hairs on his head spread in all the directions and swayed wildly as he walked like tongues of a raging fire; and demons who relished eating raw meat walked all around him.

In this fearful way he presented a repulsive and disgusting sight that resembled a cremation ground's unattended funeral fire around which cadaver eating animals such as dogs and birds such as vultures hover around.

[Note--In this analogy, Lavnasur is likened to the funeral pyre from which flames are leaping up because of his complexion, flaming hairs and stench emanating from his body, and his accompanying demons to the cadaver eating animals and birds that flock all around this pyre in the hope of grabbing a piece of un-burnt flesh. These demons would lunge forward and grab any dead animal or its part that might fall from the hands of Lavnasur just like the dogs and vultures try to snap up small bits of dead body which might be left half burnt.]

Verse no. 17:

अपशूलम् तमासाद्य लवणम् लक्ष्मणानुजः।

रुरोध संमुखीनो हि जयो रन्ध्रप्रहारिणाम्॥ १५-१७

apaśūlam tamāsādya lavaṇam lakṣmaṇānujaḥ |
rurodha saṁmukhīno hi jayo randhraprahāriṇām|| 15-17

15-17. When Laxman's younger brother Shatrughan (*lakṣmaṇānujaḥ*) observed that the demon did not have his trident (*apaśūlam*)¹ in his hands (because they were loaded with carcasses of hunted animals), he got a chance to attack Lavnasur, because it is a standard

strategy of warfare that if one attacks an enemy when the latter is unarmed and unprepared, then victory is sure to come.

[Note--¹The word ' apaśūlam ' refers to a pointed dagger, spear or lancet like weapon. It also refers to a trident as it too has pointed ends, albeit three instead of one like a dagger, a spear or a lancet. Lavnasur had inherited this trident from his grandfather Madhu, who had been gifted this weapon as a boon of Lord Shiva. While granting this boon to Madhu, Shiva had said that if anyone is attacked by this trident then the latter would be reduced to ashes. Therefore, Lavnasur always carried it with him for protection. But unfortunately, at this time he had either tucked it under one of his arms, or had left it back home when he went out for hunting wild animals with the confidence that his reputation as a ruthless killer was so famous that no one would dare to challenge him, whether or not he has this trident with him.]

Verse nos. 18:

नातिपर्याप्तमालक्ष्य मत्कुक्षेरद्य भोजनम्।
दिष्ट्या त्वमसि मे धात्रा भीतेनेवोपपादितः॥ १५-१८

nātiparyāptamālakṣya matkukṣeradya bhojanam |
diṣṭyā tvamasi me dhātrā bhītenevopapāditaḥ|| 15-18

15-18. When Lavnasur saw Shatrughan, he roared in anger at the latter: "Today my meal seemed insufficient. So the creator Brahma got so scared of my wrath that he has sent you with the purpose of replenishing my depleted stock of fresh meat.

{I would kill you and add your flesh to my plate to fill my stomach. I have not tasted human flesh for sometime, and my mouth has started watering by seeing you. Animals don't taste as nice as humans eaten raw.}" (18)

Verse nos. 18:

इति संतर्ज्य शत्रुघ्नम् राक्षसस्तज्जिघांसया।
प्रांशुमुत्पाटयामास मुस्तास्तम्बमिव द्रुमम्॥ १५-१९

iti saṁtarjya śatrughnam rākṣasastajjighāṁsayā |
prāṁśumutpāṭayāmāsa mustāstambamiva drumam|| 15-19

15-19. Saying this, Lavnasur uprooted a huge tree as easily as one would pick up a knot of grass, with the intention to kill Shatrughan with it.

Verse no. 20:

सौमित्रेर्निशितैर्बाणैरन्तरा शकलीकृतः।

गात्रम् पुष्परजः प्राप न शाखी नैरृतेरितः॥ १५-२०

saumitrerniśitairbāṇairantarā śakalīkṛtaḥ |
gātram puṣparajaḥ prāpa na śākhī nairṛteritaḥ|| 15-20

15-20. No sooner had Lavnasur thrown the huge tree at Shatrughan than the latter cut it into pieces with his sharp arrows, as a result of which the tree could not reach Shatrughan's body to cause any harm to him, but its flowers and their pollen got sprayed all over him (as if the gods were honouring Shatrughan by showering flowers on him and anointing him with their nectar for challenging Lavnasur, and to proclaim his victory over the demon in advance).

Verse no. 21:

विनाशात्तस्य वृक्षस्य रक्षस्तस्मै महोपलम्।

प्रजिघाय कृतान्तस्य मुष्टिम् पृथगिव स्थितम्॥ १५-२१

vināśāttasya vṛkṣasya rakṣastasmai mahopalam |
prajighāya kṛtāntasya muṣṭim pṛthagiva sthitam|| 15-21

15-21. When Lavnasur saw that the tree had been cut to pieces, he was taken aback at his failure to kill Shatrughan by it. So then he picked up a huge boulder and hurled it with great force at the latter as if the god of death himself had thrust his clenched fist at Shatrughan to bring him down.

Verse no. 22:

ऐन्द्रमस्त्रमुपादाय शत्रुघ्नेन स ताडितः।

सिकतात्वादपि परम् प्रपेदे परमाणुताम्॥ १५-२२

aindramastramupādāya śatrughnena sa tāḍitaḥ |
sikatātvādapi param prapede paramāṇutām|| 15-22

15-22. But Shatrughan used his weapon called 'Indra's Astra', which was like Indra's powerful Vajra (thunderbolt; a kind of hand-fired missile), to smash the boulder into smithereens midair, and reduce it to particles smaller than sand.

Verse no. 23:

तमुपाद्रवदुद्यम्य दक्षिणम् दोर्निशाचरः।

एकताल इवोत्पातपवनप्रेरितो गिरिः॥ १५-२३

tamupādravadudyamya dakṣiṇam dorniśācaraḥ |
ekatāla ivotpātapavanaprerito giriḥ|| 15-23

15-23. Lavnasur raised his right arm and lunged ferociously at Shatrughan. At that moment he appeared to be like a huge mountain that has been uprooted from its foundation by a gigantic whirlwind or a powerful tornado, and coming down rapidly to dash upon Shatrughan to crush him to death underneath.

Verse no. 24:

कार्ष्णं पत्रिणा शत्रुः स भिन्नहृदयः पतन्।
अनिनाय भुवः कम्पम् जहाराश्रमवासिनाम्॥ १५-२४

kārṣṇena patriṇā śatruḥ sa bhinnahrdayaḥ patan |
anināya bhuvaḥ kampam jahārāśramavāsinām|| 15-24

15-24. Shatrughan shot a weapon called 'Narayan-Astra', i.e. a weapon that has been empowered by invoking Lord Narayan's strength upon it¹, which immediately slammed Lavnasur so violently that he immediately fell on the ground with such a mighty thud that while on the one hand the earth shook as if there was an earthquake, and on the other hand the shuddering and trembling of the inhabitants of hermitages of sages and ascetics disappeared once and for all².

[Note--¹The Narayan-Astra is the weapon of Lord Narayan, another name of Lord Vishnu. It is usually a mace. But any weapon can be converted into a Narayan-Astra by invoking Lord Vishnu's Mantras and empowering the weapon with it.

²What is meant here is that while the earth shook when the mighty body of Lavnasur fell on it with a violent thud, the sages and ascetics had at the same time lost their fear of him which had made them hitherto shiver and tremble.]

Verse no. 25:

वयसाम् पङ्क्तयः पेतुर्हतस्योपरि विद्विषः।
तत्प्रतिद्वन्द्विनो मूर्ध्नि दिव्याः कुसुमवृष्टयः॥ १५-२५

vayasām paṅktayaḥ peturhatasyopari vidviṣaḥ |
tatpratidvandvino mūrdhni divyāḥ kusumavṛṣṭayaḥ|| 15-25

15-25. Rows of vultures and other birds of prey that feed on carcasses, such as crows, descended on the body of the dead demon Lavnasur and crowded around it (yanking out flesh and bones, and vying with each other to snatch any piece of meat, bone and entrails of the dead body which they could manage to pull out), while flowers were showered

from the heaven on the head of the demon's adversary Shatrughan (to praise him and to celebrate the occasion of his victory over the demon).

Verse no. 26:

स हत्वा लवणम् वीरस्तदा मेने महौजसः।

भ्रातुः सोदर्यमात्मानमिन्द्रजिद्वधशोभिनः॥ १५-२६

sa hatvā lavaṇam vīrastadā mene mahaujasah |
bhrātuḥ sodaryamātmānamindrajidvadhaśobhinah|| 15-26

15-26. Having slayed the mighty demon Lavnasur, Shatrughan felt that he has distinguished himself as being a true younger brother of the glorious Laxman who had earlier killed an equally mighty demon named Meghanad, the son of Ravana and the demon who had even vanquished Indra, the king of heaven (during the epic War of Lanka)¹.

[Note--¹The slaying of Meghanad by Laxman has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-16 that precede Doha no. 76.

Since Meghanad had vanquished Indra, he was often called Indrajeet, one who had conquered Indra.]

Verse no. 27:

तस्य संस्तूयमानस्य चरितार्थस्तपस्विभिः।

शुशुभे विक्रमोदग्रम् व्रीडयावनतम् शिरः॥ १५-२७

tasya saṁstūyamānasya caritārthaistapasvibhiḥ |
śuśubhe vikramodagram vṛīḍayāvanatam śiraḥ|| 15-27

15-27. When the aim of the sages and hermits of the place was successfully accomplished, they were very gratified and began to praise Shatrughan in lavish terms, but the latter was so modest by his inherent nature that he felt so shy at this honour that he politely bowed his head before them (as if silently asking them not to eulogise him so much because he has merely done his duty of protecting pious people who are being tormented by evil ones, and therefore he deserves no special praise).

Verse no. 28:

उपकूलम् च कालिन्द्याः पुरीम् पौरुषभूषणः।

निर्ममे निर्ममोऽर्थेषु मथुराम् मधुराकृतिः॥ १५-२८

upakūlam ca kālindyāḥ purīm pauruṣabhūṣaṇaḥ |
nirmame nirmamo'rtheṣu mathurām madhurākṛtiḥ|| 15-28

15-28. Then Shatrughan, who was renowned as a great, mighty and valiant warrior, who had no attachment to worldly things, and who had a very charming personality, established a city named Mathura on the banks of river Yamuna.

Verse no. 29:

या सौराज्यप्रकाशाभिर्बभौ पौरविभूतिभिः।
स्वर्गाभिष्यन्दवमनम् कृत्वेवोपनिवेशिता॥ १५-२९

yā saurājyaprakāśābhirbabhau pauravibhūtibhiḥ |
svargābhiṣyandavamanam kṛtvevopaniveśitā|| 15-29

15-29. With a noble and righteous king Shatrughan at the helm of affairs in this newly established city of Mathura, it became a magnet for nice people who came in droves from everywhere to make it their place of residence. Further, with good management and implementation of the rule of law based on the cardinal principles of Dharma (compassion, equity, righteousness, probity, propriety, goodness in thought and conduct, and an all round auspiciousness), the city thrived in all spheres of life, and soon it became prosperous and its citizens wealthy. It became a glittering city that vied with the glamour of heaven so much so that it appeared countless inhabitants of heaven had left it because it had become overcrowded and congested, and decided to migrate to Shatrughan's city of Mathura as it was equal to heaven in all aspects.

Verse no. 30:

तत्र सौधगतः पश्यन्यमुनाम् चक्रवाकिनीम्।
हेमभक्तिमतीम् भूमेः प्रवेणीमिव पिप्रिये॥ १५-३०

tatra saudhagataḥ paśyanyamunām cakravākinīm |
hemabhaktimatīm bhūmeḥ praveṇīmiva pipriye|| 15-30

15-30. Once Shatrughan went to the terrace of his tall palace and viewed river Yamuna from there. Its water was dark blue (as it so clean that it reflected the colour of the sky), and many pairs of Chakva-Chakvi birds (an aquatic bird called the ruddy duck) were chirping around merrily and frolicking on the current of its waters. The river appeared like a long braid of dark hairs that adorns the golden surface of earth.

[Note--The earth appeared golden from the high point of the palace because of the golden sunshine falling on it and illuminating it in all the directions. The clean water of river Yamuna reflected the colour of the sky, and hence it looked like a thick strand of dark hairs lying like a rope on the surface of the earth as its ornament.]

Verse no. 31:

सखा दशरथस्यापि जनकस्य च मन्त्रकृत्।
संचस्कारोभयप्रीत्या मैथिलेयौ यथाविधि॥ १५-३१

sakhā daśarathasyāpi janakasya ca mantrakṛt |
saṁcaskārobhayapṛītyā maithileyau yathāvidhi|| 15-31

15-31. Meanwhile, the great sage Valmiki, who was an expert in Mantras and Vedic rituals, , personally supervised all the rituals associated with child-birth pertaining to the two newly born sons of Sita because he was a friend of both king Dashrath and king Janak (Sita's father-in-law and the father respectively). The sage ensured that all the rituals and worships are done properly and systematically in an orderly manner.

[Note--Obviously, sage Valmiki took the help of the female inmates of his own hermitage as well as of the surrounding hermitages. He had earlier assured Sita that she should treat him as her father, and that he would ensure that her children were taken good and proper care when they are born. Refer: Canto 14, verse nos. 72, 74 and 75.]

Verse no. 32:

स तौ कुशलवोन्मृष्टगर्भक्लेदौ तदाख्यया।
कविः कुशलवावेव चकार किल नामतः॥ १५-३२

sa tau kuśalavonmr̥ṣṭagarbhakledau tadākhyayā |
kaviḥ kuśalavāveva cakāra kila nāmataḥ|| 15-32

15-32. When Sita's elder son was born, he was cleaned of the slime on his body by the hairs from the tuft that naturally grew at the end of the tail of a cow that lived in sage Valmiki's hermitage. When the second son was born, tuft of kusha grass was used to clean him.

This is why the learned sage named the two brothers after the material used to clean them at the time of their birth. So therefore, the elder son was named 'Lava' because the hair at the end of a cow's tail is known by this name in Sanskrit, while his younger brother was named 'Kusha' because kusha grass was used to clean him.

Verse no. 33:

साङ्गम् च वेदमध्याप्य किञ्चिदुत्क्रान्तशैशवौ।
स्वकृतिम् गापयामास कविप्रथमपद्धतिम्॥ १५-३३

sāṅgam ca vedamadyāpya kimcidutkrāntaśaiśavau |
svakṛtim gāpayāmāsa kaviprathamapaddhatim|| 15-33

15-33. When the two children grew up, sage Valmiki became their teacher. He taught them all the main Vedas as well as all their branches and their subsidiary knowledge (including of course the primary source of metaphysics and spiritualism as enshrined in the Upanishads). The sage also taught them the poem known as Ramayana which he had himself composed, and made them such an expert in it that the two boys could recite the verses out of their memory. {And the two boys thoroughly enjoyed learning this poem as it was a story rendered in the form of classical poetry, and it could be recited in a melodious way as compared to the dry text of other scriptures. Young boys usually are attracted to stories, and they thoroughly enjoy hearing and recounting them more than anything else.}

Verse no. 34:

रामस्य मधुरम् वृत्तम् गायन्तो मातुरग्रतः।
तद्वियोगव्यथाम् किञ्चिच्छिथिलीचक्रतुः सुतौ॥ १५-३४

rāmasya madhuram vṛttam gāyanto māturagrataḥ |
tadviyogavyathām kimcicchithilīcakratuḥ sutau|| 15-34

15-34. The two young boys would enjoy reciting this poem (i.e. the Ramayana) taught to them by their teacher, sage Valmiki, before their mother Sita to entertain her. When Sita would see them singing the verses melodiously and saw happiness on their faces as they sang, her grief and distress arising out of her separation from Lord Ram would subside a lot.

{She would see her husband's reflection on the two sons of the Lord, and their sweet voices and childish demeanours entertained Sita so much that it virtually became a pleasant and favourite pastime for both the mother and her two children.}

Verse no. 35:

इतरेऽपि रघोर्वश्यास्त्रयस्त्रेताग्नितेजसः।
तद्योगात्पतिवत्नीषु पत्नीष्वासन्द्विसूनवः॥ १५-३५

itare'pi raghorvaṁśyāstrayastretāgnitejasah |
tadyogātpativatnīṣu patnīṣvāsandvisūnavaḥ || 15-35

15-35. Meanwhile, the three other brothers of Lord Ram, viz. Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan who were as glorious and radiant as the three sacred fires of Hinduism, i.e. the Grihapatya or Garhapatya Agni, the Ahavaniya Agni, and the Dakshina Agni, also established conjugal relationship with their respective wives and begot two sons each. {Their names are mentioned later on in this Canto.}

[Note—¹The 3 ‘sacred fires’ in Hinduism are the following: (i) Grihapatya or Garhapatya Agni or the householder’s fire that is used to cook food and keep members warm; (ii) the Ahavaniya Agni or the fire lit to invoke the gods and spiritual powers during fire sacrifices and religious rituals; and (iii) Dakshina Agni, literally the southern fire but in practice meaning the fire that is lit to stand witness at the end of a sacrifice when donations, alms and charities are made by the patron.

These fires were an obligatory part of ancient Vedic rituals. The ‘fire’ is a purifying element, and it is believed that it not only purifies the soul of the patron who worships it but also cleans the offerings made to the gods.

The three sacred fires listed above symbolically represent the mother, the father, and the creator respectively.]

Verse no. 36:

शत्रुघातिनि शत्रुघ्नः सुबाहौ च बहुश्रुते।
मथुराविदिशे सूनवोर्निदधे पूर्वजोत्सुकः॥ १५-३६

śatrughātini śatrughnaḥ subāhau ca bahuśrute |
mathurāvidiśe sūnvornidadhe pūrvajotsukah|| 15-36

15-36. After completing his mission, Shatrughan was very eager to go back and meet his other three brothers. So therefore, he assigned his two sons, Subahu (who was strong in arms, hence the name) and Bahusrut (who was well-versed in different branches of knowledge, hence his name), the duty of ruling the two kingdoms of Mathura and Vidisha respectively by anointing them as the king of these two places.

Verse no. 37:

भूयस्तपोव्ययो मा भूद्वाल्मीकेरिति सोऽत्यगात्।
मैथिलीतनयोद्गीतनिःस्पन्दमृगमाश्रमम्॥ १५-३७

bhūyastapovyayo mā bhūdvālmīkeriti so'tyagāt |
maithilītanayodgītaniḥspandamṛgamāśramam|| 15-37

15-37. On his way back to Ayodhya, Shatrughan skipped the hermitage of sage Valmiki where the deer and other tamed animals used to collect cheerfully to hear the two brothers, Lava and Kusha, melodiously recite the verses of the story of the Ramayana that was taught to them by the sage. Shatrughan avoided visiting the sage because he did not wish to disturb the peaceful environment of his hermitage in the first place, and secondly, he did not want that the sage should be put to any kind of inconvenience on his account by invoking mystical powers to make arrangements for extending hospitality to him as well as the large retinue of attendants and soldiers that accompanied him.

[Note--During his outbound journey to Madhuvan, Shatrughan had experienced how sage Valmiki, who himself lived a frugal life of a hermit, had invoked his mystical powers to arrange for things needed to host a large contingent of troops and attendants who accompanied Shatrughan. He therefore did not want to put the sage to the same inconvenience because every time a sage would employ his spiritual powers for the purpose of entertaining guests, so much of his spiritual merit would be deducted from the overall balance of his accumulated spiritual wealth, much like a person's bank balance in the modern world where every withdrawal reduces the credit balance standing against his name in his account to the extent of the withdrawal.]

It is important to note here that Shatrughan had not tried to avoid meeting Sita by skipping a visit to sage Valmiki's hermitage, but to avoid putting the sage to any kind of inconvenience on his account.]

Verse no. 38:

**वशी विवेश चायोध्याम् रथ्यसंस्कारशोभिनीम्।
लवणस्य वधात्पौरैरीक्षितोऽत्यन्तगौरवम्॥ १५-३८**

vaśī viveśa cāyodhyām rathyasamskāraśobhinīm |
lavaṇasya vadhātpaurairīkṣito'tyantagauravam|| 15-38

15-38. Shatrughan, who practiced self-control, arrived in Ayodhya where the streets had been colourfully decorated by the citizens to warmly welcome him, as they wished to show their admiration for him as well as their happiness at the news that he was returning home as a victorious warrior who had vanquished the mighty demon Lavnasur.

Verse no. 39:

**स ददर्श सभामध्ये सभासद्भिरुपस्थितम्।
रामम् सीतापरित्यागादसामान्यपतिम् भुवः॥ १५-३९**

sa dadarśa sabhāmadhye sabhāsadbhirupasthitam |
rāmam sītāparityāgādasāmānyapatim bhuvah|| 15-39

15-39. When Shatrughan reached the royal court, he saw that Lord Ram was seated on the throne surrounded by many courtiers and ministers who were attending him. After abandoning his wife Sita, Lord Ram had the freedom to enjoy all the pleasures and comforts that are inherent to kingship all by himself, with nobody else to share them with him. Besides, the Lord could spend a lot more time than conventionally needed to attend court and deal with the affairs of the vast kingdom.

{To put in simple terms, if Sita had been with him, Lord Ram would have had to reserve some of his time to be spent with her, and share all the royal privileges with her. But since she was not there and he was all alone, he had the opportunity to enjoy all these privileges himself, without the necessity or obligation or courtesy or formality of sharing

them with his wife. Besides, without his wife by his side, he if he so wished he could devote all his time to enjoy such comforts and pleasures that were at his disposal without any hindrance or qualms or anyone to question his indulgences. And further, now he could spend more of his time attending the royal court and dealing with the affairs of the kingdom as he had no one to attend to in his private palace where he would go only to take rest for the day and attend to his daily personal chores and ablutions.}

Verse no. 40:

तमभ्यनन्दत्प्राणतम् लवणान्तकमग्रजः।

कालनेमिवधात्प्रीतस्तुराषाडिव शाङ्गिणम्॥ १५-४०

tamabhyanandatpraṇatam lavaṇāntakamagrajah |
kālanemivadhātpṛītasturāṣāḍiva śāṅgiṇam|| 15-40

15-40. Just like Indra, the king of heaven, had congratulated his younger brother Lord Vishnu when the latter had eliminated the demon Kalnemi¹, likewise Lord Ram rose to welcome and congratulate his younger brother Shatrughan for killing the demon Lavnasur when Shatrughan bowed to pay his respects to his elder brother, Lord Ram.

[Note--¹ Kalnemi was a powerful general in the army of Tarkasur. He was ultimately slayed by Lord Vishnu. The legends associated with him are as follows:

Lord Vishnu killed Kalnemi during the legendary God-Demon war, especially during the churning of the celestial ocean in search for Amrit, the elixir of eternal life. Kalnemi had a lion as his mount and was a powerful general in the army of the demons Tarkasur and Maya, often referred collectively as Tarakamaya. During Lord Vishnu's battle with these demons, Kalnemi attacked his foe Lord Vishnu and swallowed him whole along with his mount Garud, the Eagle. Vishnu quickly recovered and used his Chakra to cut through the demon's abdomen. Then, Lord Vishnu killed him by using the same weapon known as Sudarshan Chakra by severing the demon's head by hit. This Chakra was shaped like a circular disc with sharp razor-like serrated edge. When Kalnemi died, sage Shukracharya, the guru of the demon race, brought him back to life.

In another version of this story, Kalnemi had attacked Garud, Lord Vishnu's mount, with a trident, but the Lord caught hold of it before it could strike Garud, and then Vishnu used the same trident to kill Kalnemi and his mount, a lion.

This story of Kalnemi being slayed by Lord Vishnu has been narrated in (a) Skanda Puran, Kumarika Khanda, Maheshwar Kand or section, Chapters 19-32; (b) Padma Puran, Srishti Kand or section, Chapter 65; and (b) briefly in Srimad Bhagwad, 8-10-56 which refers to the God-Demon war where Lord Vishnu kills Kalnemi.

In his next birth, Kalnemi was re-born as Kansha, the demon-like ruler of Mathura during the era of Lord Krishna who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Since Kalnemi harboured an old grudge against Lord Vishnu, he tried his best to kill Lord Krishna, but failed and was ultimately killed by the Lord. The rebirth of Kalnemi as Kansha during Lord Krishna's era has been mentioned in Srimad Bhagwat, 10-1-68.

It must, however, be noted here that there are variations in numbering of chapters in ancient texts depending upon their editions.

Kalnemi was virtually invincible because of the powers he had acquired by doing severe penances. So only Lord Vishnu was powerful enough to eliminate him. His story is mentioned in Garga Sanhita, Chapter 6, verse no. 1-8.

In two versions of the Ramayana, i.e. Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, and Ram Charit Manas of poet Goswami Tulsidas, it is narrated that Hanuman slayed Kalnemi during the War of Lanka when the latter, at the behest of the demon king Ravana, tried to obstruct Hanuman's path when he was going to bring the herb needed to revive an injured Laxman in the battle-field of Lanka. Refer: (a) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto nos. 6-7; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 56-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58.]

Verse no. 41:

**स पृष्टः सर्वतो वार्तमाख्यद्राज्ञे न संततिम्।
प्रत्यर्पयिष्यतः काले कवेराद्यस्य शासनात्॥ १५-४१**

sa prṣṭaḥ sarvato vārtamākhyaḍrājñe na saṁtatim |
pratyardpayiṣyataḥ kāle kaverādyasya śāsanāt|| 15-41

15-41. When Lord Ram enquired from Shatrughan about his journey and the success of his primary mission, the latter informed the Lord about everything but made no mention of the birth of his two sons at sage Valmiki's hermitage, because the sage had himself told him not to divulge this information to the Lord, saying that he would himself meet Lord Ram and hand over the custody of his two sons to him at an appropriate time.

Verse no. 42:

**अथ जानपदो विप्रः शिशुमप्राप्तयौवनम्।
अवतार्याङ्कशय्यास्थम् द्वारि चक्रन्द भूपतेः॥ १५-४२**

atha jānapado vipraḥ śiśumaprāptayauvanam |
avatāryāṅkaśayyāsthām dvāri cakranda bhūpateḥ|| 15-42

15-42. After some days had passed peacefully, one day a Brahmin of the kingdom (of Ayodhya) came to the gate of the royal palace with his dead son in his arms. He put the dead body on the doorway of the king's (i.e. Lord Ram's) palace and wailed loudly.

Verse no. 43:

**शोचनीयासि वसुधे या त्वम् दशरथाच्च्युता।
रामहस्तमनुप्राप्य कष्टात्कष्टतरम् गता॥ १५-४३**

śocanīyāsi vasudhe yā tvam daśarathāccyutā |
rāmahastamanuprāpya kaṣṭātkāṣṭataram gatā|| 15-43

15-43. The Brahmin lamented: "Oh Mother Earth (vasudhe)! After you have lost the most honourable king Dashrath (owing to his death) as your care-taker and patron and came in the custody of his son Lord Ram thereafter, you have been surrounded by misfortunes and miseries, and have come to a deplorable condition (which was unimaginable during king Dashrath's time)."

Verse no. 44:

श्रुत्वा तस्य शुचो हेतुम् गोप्ता जिह्वाय राघवः।
न ह्यकालभवो मृत्युरिक्ष्वाकुपदमस्पृशत्॥ १५-४४

śrutvā tasya śuco hetum goptā jihvāya rāghavaḥ |
na hyakālabhavo mṛtyurikṣvākupadamaspṛśat|| 15-44

15-44. When Lord Ram, who was famous as a king who took good care of his subjects and always ensured their welfare, heard the lamentations of the Brahmin, he was dismayed and shocked, because during the reign of kings of the Ikshwaku dynasty there had never been an untimely death of anybody. No young person died before his or her elders, and no father had to suffer bereavement due to the death of his son or daughter.

Verse no. 45:

स मुहूर्तम् क्षमस्वेति दिवजमाश्वास्य दुःखितम्।
यानम् सस्मार कौबेरम् वैवस्वतजिगीषया॥ १५-४५

sa muhūrtam kṣamasveti divjamāśvāsy duḥkhitam |
yānam sasmāra kauberam vaivasvatajigīṣayā|| 15-45

15-45. Lord Ram called the grieving Brahmin father and requested him to excuse the Lord for this minor lapse. The Lord asked him to wait for some time while he would make arrangements to remove the cause of his grief, i.e. make arrangements to revive his son back to life.

Giving the Brahmin this assurance, Lord Ram summoned the Pushpak plane with an intention of attacking and vanquishing the god of death, i.e. Yama (the son of Vaivaswat; "vaivasvata"), and forcing the latter to spare the Brahmin's son.

Verse no. 46:

आत्तशस्त्रस्तदध्यास्य प्रस्थितः स रघूद्वहः।
उच्चचार पुरस्तस्य गूढरूपा सरस्वती॥ १५-४६

āṭṭaśastrastadadhyāsyā prasthitaḥ sa raghūdvaḥ |
uccacāra purastasya gūḍharūpā sarasvatī || 15-46

15-46. When Lord Ram armed himself with his weapons and mounted the Pushpak plane to prepare to go and vanquish Yama, an invisible deity spoke to him from the sky in a deep, resounding voice (gūḍharūpā). It was as if goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of knowledge and wisdom, herself was giving some wise advice (sarasvatī) to the Lord who was an honourable scion of the ancient king Raghu's dynasty (raghūdvaḥ).

Verse no. 47:

राजन् प्रजासु ते कश्चिदपचारः प्रवर्तते।
तमन्विष्य प्रशमयेर्भविष्यसि ततः कृती॥ १५-४७

rājan prajāsu te kaścidapacāraḥ pravartate |
tamanviṣya praśamayerbhaviṣyasi tataḥ kṛtī || 15-47

15-47. The voice of the invisible deity in the sky (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the deity who is a guardian of knowledge, as well as the upholder of the rule of law and order in this world, and who is responsible for ensuring that everyone in creation adheres to the universal set of protocols for righteous and honourable living that has been designed to maintain balance and goodness in this creation) said: "Oh Lord Ram, the noble king of the realm! There is someone amongst your subjects who is violating the rule of conduct set for different segments of society to maintain law and order in this creation. This break from protocol creates a bad precedent, and it cannot be neglected for its consequences would have far-reaching effects, and it would upset the balance and harmony needed for smooth and orderly working of the different segments of the society. Otherwise, there would be anarchy and a free-for-all situation that would be a problem for you as well, especially undermining your reputation as an upholder of Dharma and principles of right conduct in all spheres of life (i.e. as a guardian of the rule of law, and strict adherence to the principles of righteousness, propriety and right path).

So therefore, you must go and find out who is violating such rules and doing things or acting in a way that is contrary to set norms of behaviour for members of the different sections of the society as ordained by ancient tradition (because such deeds, if allowed to go unpunished, would, in the long run, cause disarray and anarchy amongst your subjects, and undermine your authority and good name as a law-keeper). It is only then that your aim of restoring the life of the Brahmin's son would be fulfilled, and you would gain credit for doing your duty as a king."

{This is because doing wrong and breaking or violating rules of Dharma and duties assigned to various segments of the society is tantamount to committing a sin and misdemeanour, and when sins and misconduct are committed by the subjects of a king then not only calamities and unnatural events of ominous nature start happening in the kingdom, but the king himself is held responsible and guilty of allowing such things to happen.}

Verse no. 48:

इत्याप्तवचनाद्रामो विनेष्यन्वर्णविक्रियाम्।

दिशः पपात पत्रेण वेगनिष्कम्पहेतुना॥ १५-४८

ityāptavacanādrāmo vineṣyanvarṇavikriyām |
diśaḥ papāta patreṇa veganiṣkampahetunā|| 15-48

15-48. Having been thus alerted by the voice from the sky, Lord Ram changed course. While still riding the Pushpak plane-- which had flags fluttering from it, which had tremendous speed, and which moved so smoothly that there were no shaking or shuddering, making its passengers feel very comfortable-- he decided to make an aerial survey of his realm to find out where any of the principles of Dharma related to the four Ashrams (segments of the society) were being violated without his knowledge, and which has led to the death of the Brahmin's son as well as smearing his own reputation with the taint of being negligent.

Verse no. 49:

अथ धूमाभितामाक्षम् वृक्षशाखावलम्बिनम्।

ददर्श कंचिदैक्ष्वाकस्तपस्यन्तमधोमुखम्॥ १५-४९

atha dhūmābhitāmākṣam vṛkṣaśākhāvalambinam |
dadarśa kañcidaikṣvākastapasyantamadhomukham|| 15-49

15-49. While surveying his kingdom to find out any violation of the rules of the four Ashrams by anyone, at one place he saw that a man, attired as an ascetic, was dangling upside down from the branch of a tree with a fire burning on the ground below him. He was sucking the smoke of the fire which had made his eyes red and swollen. He appeared to be doing some kind of penance.

Verse no. 50:

पृष्ठनामान्वयो राजा स किलाचष्ट धूमपः।

आत्मानम् शम्बुकम् नाम शूद्रम् सुरपदार्थिनम्॥ १५-५०

prṣṭanāmānvayo rājā sa kilācaṣṭa dhūmapaḥ |
ātmānam śambukam nāma śūdrām surapadārthinam|| 15-50

15-50. This sight aroused curiosity in Lord Ram. So the Lord asked that man: "Who are you, what is your name, and what is the race in which you are born."

The ascetic replied: "I am doing penance with the aim of attaining heaven, the abode of gods. My name is Shambuk, and I am born in the Shudra race (which is the fourth and lowest class in the four divisions of the society)."

Verse no. 51:

तपस्यनधिकारित्वात्प्रजानाम् तमघावहम्।

शीर्षच्छेद्यम् परिच्छिद्य नियन्ता शस्त्रमाददे॥ १५-५१

tapasyanadhikāritvātprajānām tamaghāvaham |
śīrṣacchedyam paricchidya niyantā śāstramādade|| 15-51

15-51. When Lord Ram heard what the man had said, he was taken aback. {The Lord was not against anyone doing penance or aiming to go to heaven, but it should be done in a proper way and in a manner as sanctioned in the scriptures. As a 'shudra', the man was not authorised to do penance as a means to attain heaven (because for such men doing selfless service to others, leading a simple and orderly life, and helping others carry on with their assigned duties has been ordained as the easiest and the most convenient way to attain salvation and emancipation of their souls, which translates into attaining heaven).

Since the man was violating the set norms pertaining to the segment of the society to which he belonged (i.e. Shudra), the Lord decided to punish him, as this single man's unauthorised actions were having a negative impact on the overall balance in the society of his kingdom, and since he was a king it was his duty to prevent such things from happening and be allowed to perpetuate. {The Lord thought for a while and came to the conclusion that if he neglects this single instance of violation of the rules, then others too would follow suit, and gradually all norms of conduct would be gone to the wind, and a culture of free-for-all would come to roost and get entrenched in his kingdom. So therefore, this wayward behaviour must be nipped in the bud.}

Deciding that it was prudent and wise to kill this man for the wider good of the subjects of his kingdom, Lord Ram picked up his weapon with this purpose in mind.

Verse no. 52:

स तद्वक्त्रम् हिमक्लिष्टकिञ्जल्कमिव पङ्कजम्।

ज्योतिष्कणाहतश्मश्रु कण्ठनालादपातयत्॥ १५-५२

sa tadvaktram himakliṣṭakiñjalkamiva paṅkajam |
jyotiṣkaṇāhataśmaśru kaṇṭhanālādapātayat|| 15-52

15-52. With one swift stroke, the Lord cut-off his head from his trunk just like a lotus flower that can be swiftly cut-off from its stalk. The man's beards had been scorched by the flames of the fire, and his trunk was blackened by the heat of the fire burning beneath. When the severed head fell down on the ground by the side of the pile of wood and the

trunk collapsed near it and got covered by ash and dirt, it reminded one of a lotus that has been frostbitten and dislodged from its stalk, while the broken stalk itself looked dirty as it was smudged over by the dirt of the surrounding ground when it fell by the side of the lotus.

Verse no. 53:

**कृतदण्डः स्वयम् राजा लेभे शूद्रः सताम् गतिम्।
तपसा दुश्चरेणापि न स्वमार्गविलङ्घिना॥ १५-५३**

kṛtadaṇḍaḥ svayam rājā lebhe śūdraḥ satām gatim |
tapasā duścarenāpi na svamārgavilāṅghinā|| 15-53

15-53. When the Shudra man got his due punishment at the hands of a righteous king, Lord Ram, he attained deliverance for his soul which he would not have otherwise got as he was violating or transgressing the sanctioned codes of conduct for the particular section of the society to which he belonged. {Refer verse no. 51 herein above.}

[Note--To wit, if a person accepts punishment for any mistake he has done, then he is deemed to have freed himself from the consequences of his mistake. It is only when a person's sins go unpunished that he or she has to suffer. After all, this is the very purpose of doing penance, observing austerities, making charities, and undertaking pilgrimage and other religious practices--so that the accumulated negative effects of any wrong done by the person in his life, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or inadvertently, that may otherwise block the liberation and deliverance of the concerned person's soul from the cycle of transmigration, is neutralised and taken care of, thereby paving the way for his emancipation and salvation.]

Verse no. 54:

**रघुनाथोऽप्यगस्त्येन मार्गसंदर्शितात्मना।
महौजसा संयुयुजे शरत्काल इवेन्दुना॥ १५-५४**

raghunātho'pyagastyena mārgasaṁdarśitātmanā |
mahaujasā saṁyuyuje śaratkāla ivendunā|| 15-54

15-54. On his way back to Ayodhya, Lord Ram met the most exalted sage Agastya who was renowned for his penances and austerities. This meeting reminded one of the part of the year when the autumn season and the full moon shining brilliantly in the sky appear together¹.

[Note—¹The autumn season comes once in a year, and it marks the season when farmers harvest their crops. Although the full moon appears every month of the year, in all the seasons, but its appearance during autumn season not only happens once in a year but it

shines ever so brilliantly during this month because the sky is clear after the rainy season. Likewise, though Lord Ram had met sage Agastya twice earlier also, once while on his way to the forest*1, and then on his way back from Lanka to Ayodhya*2, it was a coincidence that Lord Ram would meet sage Agastya on the way back to Ayodhya for the third time, especially after becoming the King-Emperor of the empire. On the previous two occasions the Lord was attired as a hermit, but now he shone in royal splendour. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *1Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 12; and *2 Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 120.}

In this metaphor, Lord Ram is like the autumn season, and sage Agastya is the moon of autumn. Since autumn is the harvesting season when crop is harvested for consumption by people that in turn sustains life on earth, so was the rule of Lord Ram who took care of his subjects and ensured their all-round well-being, welfare, good and sustenance. Sage Agastya was like the moon of autumn because he was an illustrious and brilliant sage of high spiritual achievement, enlightenment, depth of knowledge accompanied by the virtue of self-realisation and self-control. In an assembly of sages and ascetics, sage Agastya stood out prominently like the shining full moon of autumn does in the sky amidst the numerous stars and planets that dot the firmament and look dim in the presence of the glorious moon.

The full moon of autumn is regarded as a symbol of beauty, tranquillity and spiritual connectivity with the divine forces of Nature that act as an anchor for creation. It is also called the 'harvest moon' because during this season the farmers harvest their crop before the harsh days of winter set in. The full moon's bright light help the farmers to work during the night after the sun sets. Harvesting of crop is crucial for sustaining life, because without food no life can survive on earth. Merely sowing seed and good rainfall during the rainy season are of no use if the crop is not harvested for consumption.

The moon of the autumn season has a clear moonlight that provides illumination to the farmers so that they can work late into the night. The moonlight is best in the year during the autumn season: it is bright, clear and steady in a clear sky free from clouds and dust, and this moon is like the heaven's own night-lamp for inhabitants of earth.

During this period, the moon rises at almost the same time for several nights, around sunset. From spiritual point of view it symbolises steadiness of spiritual progress and achievement, uniformity in the virtues of wisdom, enlightenment, self-control and self-realisation, as well as righteousness of thought, constancy of behaviour and equanimity of attitude towards all matters pertaining to life, virtues shared by sage Agastya.

And Lord Ram looking after the welfare of his subjects and sustaining them through his magnanimous attitude, equanimity and rule of law symbolises the autumn season because during this season crop is harvested for providing food all the people of the land, without discrimination.

There is another interpretation of this metaphor of the moon and autumn as applied to sage Agastya and Lord Ram. 'Light' represents knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, awareness and realisation, while 'darkness' stands for all things opposite, i.e. ignorance, stupidity, dullness, lack of knowledge, awareness and wisdom etc. So therefore, just like the moon's light helps the farmer to continue with his duties and responsibilities regarding his harvest yield during the autumn season, which would not have been possible in the darkness of the night sans moonlight, so was the case with Lord

Ram as he would consult sage Agastya whenever they met to discuss various issues, and the sage's wise advice would then show Lord Ram the right and correct path he should choose from the many options before him. During this particular meeting referred to in the present verse, the Lord faced a piquant situation: a man had brought a dead child before him and accused him of violating laws of good rule expected from a king because such calamities as untimely death and other sufferings that the subject of a kingdom have to endure happen only in the reign of a sinful ruler. This view was endorsed by the deity's voice in the sky. Understandably, Lord Ram was confused and very anxious to set things right as he was sure he had not personally done anything that would be sinful or unrighteous.

In this backdrop, it is quite sure that the two, Agastya and Lord Ram, discussed the present issue about the voice that Lord Ram heard from the sky and its deep meaning, and the Lord most surely sought sage Agastya's advice on the matter and what he should do now as a follow-up action. The wise and erudite sage must have given the Lord council on this matter, and at the same time calm the Lord's anxiety about any ill effects of any inadvertent error that he may have made unwittingly during the routine course of managing the state of affairs of a huge kingdom, trying to do his best, but as a human may have made some slips here and there.

This is why this metaphor fits right in: the 'light' of sage's wisdom and erudition guided Lord Ram at a time when he was ignorant of any kind of wrong-doing under his command, and was therefore perplexed as what to and what not to do next. The sage's advice showed him the right path by lighting it in a situation when everything seemed 'dark' and confused for the Lord.]

Verse no. 55:

कुम्भयोनिरलंकारम् तस्मै दिव्यपरिग्रहम्।

ददौ दत्तम् समुद्रेण पीतेनेवात्मनिष्क्रयम्॥ १५-५५

kumbhayoniralan̄kāram tasmai divyaparigraham |
dadau dattam samudreṇa pītenevātmaniṣkrayam|| 15-55

15-55. Sage Agastya gave Lord Ram certain ornaments (a brilliantly shining bracelet) as a gift that the ocean had earlier given to him to please the sage when the latter had threatened to drink the entire water of the ocean to dry it up¹.

[Note--¹According to legend, sage Agastya had dried up the ocean by drinking it in three gulps. He had used the joint palms of his hands to scoop up the water to gulp it down.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva, Cantos 103-105; and (iv) Anand Ramayan, Vilaas Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-24. This feat of sage Agastya is cited by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

There are three versions of how Agastya had drunk the ocean. Let us read them in brief now.

(a) Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

(b) This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the *Anand Ramayan* (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

According to this legend, the ocean had washed away the items of worship that sage Agastya had arranged for his routine religious rituals. Agastya became peeved and drank up the ocean. When the gods prayed to him to forgive the ocean, the kind sage obliged and refilled it in the form of his urine. That is the reason why the ocean is bitter and salty like urine.

(c) The third version is this: Sage Agastya once took pity on a bird whose eggs were washed away by the ocean. The grieving bird was trying to dry the water of the ocean by picking drops of it in its beak. Then the sage decided to punish the ocean by drinking it up.

In all these versions, one thing is found common, and it is that the sage had invoked the divine powers of Lord Ram to accomplish this unique feat. He had pronounced the Mantra (spiritual formula to invoke the cosmic powers of a chosen deity) of Lord Ram, which is "Raamaaye Raamchandraaye Raambhadraaye".]

Verse no. 56:

स दधन्मैथिलीकण्ठनिर्व्यापारेण बाहुना।

पश्चान्निववृते रामः प्राक्परासुर्दिवजात्मजः॥ १५-५६

sa dadhanmaithilīkaṇṭhanirvyāpāreṇa bāhunā |
paścānnivavṛte rāmaḥ prākparāsurdvijātmajaḥ || 15-56

15-56. Lord Ram wore that ornament on his forearm which had been deprived of the privilege of being wrapped around the neck of Sita because she was no longer with the Lord.

{To wit, Lord Ram would put his arms lovingly around the neck of Sita during the couple's private moments. Now that Sita was no more with him, his arms felt lonely and sad. So to please his arms which were feeling hurt and sad, Lord Ram put the beautiful ornaments given to him by the sage around his forearms in a symbolic gesture to please them. If the ornament was one, the Lord put it around one arm, and if there were two pieces, he put one in each of his two arms.}

Meanwhile, even before the Lord returned to Ayodhya, the dead son of the complaint Brahmin man was revived back to life.

Verse no. 57:

तस्य पूर्वोदिताम् निन्दाम् दिवजः पुत्रसमागतः।

स्तुत्वा निवर्तयामास त्रातुर्वैवस्वतादपि॥ १५-५७

tasya pūrvoditām nindām dvijaḥ putrasamāgataḥ |
stutvā nivartayāmāsa trāturvaivasvatādapi|| 15-57

15-57. When his son was revived back to life, the Brahmin, who had a while ago heaped ignominy on Lord Ram and derided him for neglecting the welfare of his subjects, now became so pleased that he lavishly praised the Lord in glorious terms. The Brahmin literally washed away his sin of accusing the righteous king of wrong-doing by lauding the same king and singing laurels in his praise--because Lord Ram had saved his son from the shackles of Yama, the god of death.

[Note--One minute ago, the Brahmin accused Lord Ram as being the most sinful king ever born in Ayodhya simply because his son had died (refer: verse nos. 42-44 herein above), and a little while later he was all praise for the Lord--because his son was saved from death, irrespective of the fact that another man had to die for him (i.e. the Shudra, refer: verse no. 52)! Such is the selfish way of this world.]

Verse no. 58:

तमध्वराय मुक्ताश्वम् रक्षःकपिनरेश्वराः।

मेघाः सस्यमिवाम्भोभिरभ्यवर्षन्नुपायनैः॥ १५-५८

tamadhvarāya muktāśvam rakṣaḥkapinareśvarāḥ |
meghāḥ sasyamivāmbhobhirabhyavarṣannupāyanaiḥ|| 15-58

15-58. After sometime, Lord Ram organised a horse sacrifice when he set a horse free to roam anywhere it wished.

At that time, his two friends, Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, and Vibhishan, the king of Lanka, arrived with immense amount of costly gifts for the Lord and heaped them all around them just like clouds pour abundance of rain to sustain standing crops in the field.

[Note--During a 'horse sacrifice', a horse is set free, and a large army follows it from behind. Any ruler who stops the horse from proceeding further had to fight the army. If he lost then he had to pay a heavy penalty as tribute to the king to whom the horse belonged, and also accept his dominance over his kingdom so much so that he becomes obliged to pay an annual tribute the conquering king. On the other hand, if he wins, then the horse sacrifice is deemed to have failed, which meant a calamity for the horse-owning king who would now have to surrender his crown to the other king who held the horse and won the battle.

In case the horse got killed during the conflict or for any other reason, then the 'horse sacrifice' was deemed to be defiled. This would infuriate the emperor who would then lead a personal campaign at the head of a huge army to his enemy's lands, and use the full brutal force and might of his power to lay waste the opponent king's realms.

In case the horse died due to some other reason than a battle with an opposing king, then the entire detachment of the army, with its soldiers and commanders as well as those responsible for the protection of the horse, were put to the sword.

Death of a sacrificial horse before the end a successful campaign indicated an evil omen for the emperor, so he would do large-scale penances and perform all sorts of charities and other religious deeds, along with engaging priests to perform elaborate rituals, in order to deflect the negative influences of malignant stars. Till the time of the next successful completion of another horse sacrifice, this emperor would remain under constant mental distress and fear of a disaster befalling him and his empire, especially the prospect of defeat in case of an attack by another powerful ruler.

Usually, only great emperors and mighty kings had the wherewithal and the competence to successfully carry out a horse sacrifice. In ancient times, it was a means for a great king-emperor to exert and exercise his authority over his vast and extended realm, and to keep other smaller kings and principalities reined-in who otherwise would have declared their independence from the sovereign, thinking that the latter has become weak.

Another reason why other kings would submit without a fight is that a cloak of religiosity was used to hide the actual intention, because it was believed that organising a horse sacrifice, called the Aswamedh Yagya, is a religiously sanctified ritual for great king, and that the horse is consecrated by elaborate rituals, and therefore to obstruct its path would be a sacrilegious and contemptuous act, which would invite punishment by the gods in some way or the other.

A huge wealth was needed to support this mammoth exercise. So friends of kings who performed a horse sacrifice would come voluntarily to donate wealth and contribute

their help by way of lending troops to the effort. In this case, Sugriv and Vibhishan came to help Lord Ram successfully complete the ritual.

Verse no. 59:

दिग्भ्यो निमन्त्रिताश्चैनमभिजग्मुर्महर्षयः।

न भौमान्येव धिषण्यानि हित्वा ज्योतिर्मयान्यपि॥ १५-५९

digbhyo nimantritāścainamabhijagmurmaharṣayaḥ |
na bhaumānyeva dhiṣṇyāni hitvā jyotirmayānyapi|| 15-59

15-59. During the rituals of the horse sacrifice, Lord Ram had invited all the great sages and saints of the time from all the corners of the world. They had come not only from the four corners of the earth but also from the heaven.

Verse no. 60:

उपशल्यनिविष्टैस्तैश्चतुर्द्वारमुखी बभौ।

अयोध्या सृष्टलोकेव सद्यः पैतामही तनुः॥ १५-६०

upaśalyaniviṣṭaistaiścaturdvāramukhī babhau |
ayodhyā sṛṣṭalokeva sadyaḥ paitāmahī tanuḥ|| 15-60

15-60. The arriving guest sages and seers began to put up camp in the villages on the outskirts of the glorious city of Ayodhya. When they finally entered the city through its four massive gates on its four corners while chanting Vedic hymns, then at the time the city of Ayodhya looked like a living embodiment of the creator Brahma who too had four mouths and who had pronounced the four Vedas through his four mouths.

[Note--Ayodhya had four great gates on four sides just like the four mouths of Brahma facing the four directions. Brahma had pronounced the four Vedas, Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva, by these four mouths of his, and the entry of great sages through the four gates of Ayodhya while chanting hymns of the Vedas reminded one of that ancient event.]

Verse no. 61:

श्लाघ्यस्त्यागोऽपि वैदेह्याः पत्युः प्राग्वंशवासिनः।

अनन्यजानेः सैवासीद्यस्माज्जाया हिरण्मयी॥ १५-६१

ślāghyastyāgo'pi vaidehyāḥ patyuh prāgvamśavāsinah |
ananyajāneḥ saivāsīdyasmājjāyā hiraṇmayī|| 15-61

15-61. After abandoning Sita, there was one thing for which Lord Ram was universally praised, and it was that he did not marry again¹. But for a married king, it was necessary to have his consort by his side to conduct the rituals associated with the horse sacrifice. So therefore, Lord Ram had got a life-size statue of Sita made of gold and kept it on his left where ordinarily Sita would have sat, to symbolically represent her during the rituals.

[Note—¹Lord Ram was extremely conscientious about his conduct and was very careful about being on the right side of Dharma, so as to ensure that not a single subject of his kingdom or elsewhere could raise a finger against him and his upright nature. So when he had heard some evil gossip doing the rounds amongst his own subjects concerning his wife Sita, he was astonished, dismayed and dumbfounded. He could have easily summoned that mischief monger and summarily punished him for his unsubstantiated, false and audacious accusations, but since he loved his subjects like a father loves his children, and at the same time also realised that he could not suppress popular voice or view by repressive means by punishing an individual as it would do more harm than good to his own reputation, the Lord decided to remove the very cause of this cancerous hush-hush talk by sending Sita away, or literally discarding her even though he was absolutely sure she was pure, loyal, chaste and immaculate as was proved in the battle-field of Lanka itself when the Lord had asked her to prove her purity by undergoing the ‘fire-test’. {Refer: (a) Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chanda line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 109; (b) Valmiki Ramayan, Yuddha Kand, Chapter 116; and (c) Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto nos. 12-13.}

But the irony is that no one from Ayodhya was a witness to this fire-test as it was done in far-away Lanka. Obviously this situation paved the way for gossip and tongue-in-cheek remarks, and the subjects could be excused for such wild accusations because, honestly, they were completely ignorant of the reality that Sita had already proved her purity by the fire-test.

When Lord Ram deeply pondered over this aspect of the matter, he realised his own mistake of not getting the fire-test done in Ayodhya before his subjects. Hence, since it was his own error of judgement, he thought it prudent not to punish the gossip, and instead banish Sita to a safe place under the guardianship of the senior sage Valmiki.

In this context, the reader should refer to Canto 14, verse no. 61 where we read that Sita herself has raised the question of the propriety of Lord Ram’s action of leaving her in spite of her having proved the purity of herself and the immaculacy of her character by undergoing the rigorous fire-test.

Refer also to Canto 14, verse nos. 32-43 where the details of why Lord Ram decided to abandon Sita have been narrated.

Insofar as that was done, it was alright. But when the Lord did the Aswamedha Yagya or the horse sacrifice, as was required of him owing to his status as a great king and emperor of the realm, the need arose to have his wife alongside him to complete the formalities of the ritual. The only way out was to have an image of Sita by his side. That Lord Ram did so with a heavy heart, and instead of marrying someone else on this pretext that a wife was needed to complete the rituals proved how loyal he was to Sita, and how diligent he was to uphold the haloed, honourable and noble tradition of having only one wife in one’s lifetime.]

Verse no. 62:

विधेरधिकसंभारस्ततः प्रववृते मखः।

आसन्यत्र क्रियाविघ्ना राक्षसा एव रक्षिणः॥ १५-६२

vidheradhikasaṁbhārastataḥ pravavṛte makhaḥ |
āsanyatra kriyāvighnā rākṣasā eva rakṣiṇaḥ|| 15-62

15-62. In this majestic way, the horse sacrifice of Lord Ram commenced in a grand scale. The uniqueness of this sacrifice was that, one, the materials collected for undertaking it far exceeded the actual requirement (as huge gifts were brought by Sugriv and Vibhishan as well as countless other rulers), and two, the demons, who would usually create hurdles in the successful completion of such sacrifices, were themselves protecting it and lending their support to it (because their king Vibhishan was Lord Ram's friend, and he had personally arrived to help the Lord with its successful completion).

Verse no. 63:

अथ प्राचेतसोपज्ञम् रामायणमितस्ततः।

मैथिलेयौ कुशलवौ जगत्गुरुचोदितौ॥ १५-६३

atha prācetasopajñam rāmāyaṇamitastataḥ |
maithileyau kuśalavau jagaturgurucoditau|| 15-63

15-63. In the meantime, on the instructions of sage Valmiki, Lava and Kusha, Sita's two sons, would roam around in the surrounding hermitages and hamlets to melodiously sing the verses of the Ramayana which the sage had himself composed and taught it to these two charming young boys (who had learnt the entire epic by heart, and they would recite it with an emotional involvement in it).

Verse no. 64:

वृत्तम् रामस्य वाल्मीकेः कृतिस्तौ किंनरस्वनौ।

किम् तद्येन मनो हर्तुमलम् स्याताम् न शृण्वताम्॥ १५-६४

vṛttam rāmasya vālmīkeḥ kṛtistau kiṁnarasvanau |
kim tadyena mano hartumalam syātām na śṛṇvatām|| 15-64

15-64. There was no sweeter rendering of any poem than the ones Lava and Kusha sang. First of all, it had the divine story of Lord Ram as its central theme, secondly its lyrics were composed in perfect grammatical order by the learned and most skilled sage Valmiki himself as ordained by the creator Brahma himself, and third, it was sung by two

young boys whose melodious voice not only rivalled but even excelled the sweetness of singing of heavenly singers called Kinnars. Who was there who would not become mesmerised and spell-bound upon hearing the two boys singing the verses of the Ramayana. All those who listened to the singing of the two young and charming boys would become enthralled, and they would hear them sing in rapt attention.

Verse no. 65:

रूपे गीते च माधुर्यतयोस्तज्जैर्निवेदितम्।

ददर्श सानुजो रामः शुश्राव च कुतूहली॥ १५-६५

rūpe gīte ca mādhyamāntayostajjñairniveditam |
dadarśa sānujo rāmaḥ śuśrāva ca kutūhalī|| 15-65

15-65. When this news reached the ears of Lord Ram, he summoned the two boys, and along with his other three brothers, the Lord heard Lava and Kusha sing the verses of the Ramayana (in his court). The Lord and his brothers heard the rendering of the Ramayana with rapt attention, and they were left spell-bound and astonished at the melodious way of singing as well as the beauty and the charm of the two young singers.

Verse no. 66:

तद्गीतश्रवणैकाग्रा संसदश्रुमुखी बभौ।

हिमनिष्यन्दिनी प्रातर्निर्वातेव वनस्थली॥ १५-६६

tadgītaśravaṇaikāgrā saṁsadaśrumukhī babhau |
himaniṣyandinī prāternirvāteva vanasthalī|| 15-66

15-66. The whole court sat still and in rapt attention, silently hearing the singing by the two boys. Everyone present was so emotionally moved at the memory of Sita that tears rolled down the eyes of every person present just like the case of dew drops dripping from leaves, flowers and branches of trees during the early hours of a cold morning during the winter season.

Verse no. 67:

वयोवेषविसंवादि रामस्य च तयोस्तदा।

जनता प्रेक्ष्य सादृश्यम् नाक्षिकम्पम् व्यतिष्ठत॥ १५-६७

vayoveṣavisamvādi rāmasya ca tayostadā |
janatā prekṣya sādṛśyam nākṣikampam vyatiṣṭhata|| 15-67

15-67. The assembly gazed fixedly at the two boys, and was stunned at the remarkable resemblance that the two young boys had with Lord Ram, there being only two exceptions--one, that the two boys were attired in the robes of a hermit while Lord Ram was dressed in royal robes, and the other exception pertained to their age, for while the two boys were of a tender young age whereas Lord Ram was an adult.

Verse no. 68:

उभयोर्न तथा लोकः प्रावीण्येन विसिष्मिये।

नृपतेः प्रीतिदानेषु वीतस्पृहतया यथा॥ १५-६८

ubhayorna tathā lokaḥ prāvīṇyena viśiṣmiye |
nṛpateḥ prītidāneṣu vītaspr̥hatayā yathā|| 15-68

15-68. The public was not so much astonished at the beautiful and melodious way the two boys had sung the verses of the epic which they had learnt from sage Valmiki as the way they had declined to accept the gifts that Lord Ram had affectionately wished to give them for their singing.

{It was customary for kings to extend courtesies by way of giving some kind of gift or reward to musicians, singers, dancers, as well as scholars and experts in various fields such as literature, art, scriptures etc. who attended their court. So therefore, impressed by the two young boys, Lord Ram wished to give them something as reward, but the boys refused to accept it. Never had it ever happened earlier that anyone would have the courage to refuse anything that the king gave him, as that would be tantamount to insulting the majesty of the king. So when Lava and Kusha politely declined to accept the gift that Lord Ram offered to them, it not only surprised but even sent shock-waves across the rank and file of the court. People wondered how Lord Ram will receive this rebuke.}

Verse no. 69:

गेये को नु विनेता वाम् कस्य चेयम् कृतिः कवेः।

इति राजा स्वयम् पृष्टौ तौ वाल्मीकिमशंसताम्॥ १५-६९

geye ko nu vinetā vām kasya ceyam kṛtiḥ kaveḥ |
iti rājā svayam pṛṣṭau tau vālmīkimaśamsatām|| 15-69

15-69. When Lord Ram enquired from the two young singers who taught them the art of singing so melodiously, and whose composition was it that they were singing so beautifully, the two brothers disclosed to the Lord that their teacher and instructor was sage Valmiki.

Verse no. 70:

अथ सावरजो रामः प्राचेतसमुपेयिवान्।

उरीकृत्यात्मनो देहम् राज्यमस्मै न्यवेदयत्॥ १५-७०

atha sāvarajo rāmaḥ prācetasamupeyivān |
ūrīkṛtyātmāno deham rājyamasmai nyavedayat|| 15-70

15-70. Thereafter, Lord Ram went to meet sage Valmiki along with his three brothers. There, he offered the sage his entire kingdom in donation, only keeping his body for himself.

[Note--Lord Ram was so overwhelming obliged to the sage and full of gratitude for him that he offered everything he had to the sage. But sages of those times did not hanker after money and power as they believed in renunciation, modesty, penance and austerity. Their wealth was their spiritual powers and knowledge. Therefore, it is obvious that sage Valmiki did not accept anything.]

Verse no. 71:

स तावाख्याय रामाय मैथिलीयौ तदात्मजौ।

कविः कारुणिको वव्रे सीतायाः संपरिग्रहम्॥ १५-७१

sa tāvākhyāya rāmāya maithiliyau tadātmajau |
kaviḥ kāruṇiko vavre sītāyāḥ saṁparigraham|| 15-71

15-71. The most merciful and compassionate sage Valmiki told Lord Ram that the two boys, Lava and Kusha, were the sons of Sita, and therefore the Lord should accept them as well as their mother (Sita).

Verse no. 72:

तात शुद्धा समक्षम् नः स्नुषा ते जातवेदसि।

दौरात्म्याद्रक्षसस्ताम् तु नात्रत्याः श्रद्धधुः प्रजाः॥ १५-७२

tāta śuddhā samakṣam naḥ snuṣā te jātavedasi |
daurātmyādrakṣasastām tu nātratyāḥ śraddadhuḥ prajāḥ|| 15-72

15-72. Lord Ram said to sage Valmiki: "Oh gracious Lord! Your daughter-in-law had already proved her innocence and purity by undergoing the fire-test, and I know that she is chaste, loyal, honest and immaculate. But the problem is different--the subjects of the kingdom harbour doubts about her character given the infamous reputation of Ravana in whose captivity she had to spend many days before I could free her. {This has caused nasty gossiping and scandalous accusations against me as well as her. This is the only reason why I had to leave her, and not because of any other reason whatsoever. I say this

to you on solemn oath that I am convinced of her purity, but tongues are wagging in the kingdom.}

Verse no. 73:

ताः स्वचारित्र्यमुद्दिश्य प्रत्याययतु मैथिली।

ततः पुत्रवतीमेनाम् प्रतिपत्स्ये त्वदाज्ञया॥ १५-७३

tāḥ svacāritryamuddīśya pratyāyayatu maithilī |
tataḥ putravatīmenām pratipatsye tvadājñayā|| 15-73

15-73. Therefore, if Sita could prove her innocence before everyone in a full court to convince the subjects of the kingdom about the purity of her character, then surely I will accept my sons as well as her as you have advised me."

Verse no. 74:

इति प्रतिश्रुते राज्ञा जानकीमाश्रमान्मुनिः।

शिष्यैरानाययामास स्वसिद्धिम् नियमैरिव॥ १५-७४

iti pratiśrute rājñā jānakīmāśramānmuniḥ |
śiṣyairānāyayāmāsa svasiddhim niyamairiva|| 15-74

15-74. When the learned sage Valmiki heard this condition set by Lord Ram, he sent his disciples and called Sita from his hermitage as if the sage was summoning his spiritual accomplishments that he had obtained by means of doing various penances and austerities as well as other religious activities that he had been doing since a long time.

[Note--In this analogy, the disciples sent by the sage are likened to the many penances and austerities etc. that he had been doing, and Sita is likened to the fruit of these exercises. This is because just as the fruit of religious exercises is always good, honourable and noble, so Sita too was noble, honourable and immaculate. The sage was convinced of Sita's purity, and that is why he did not think twice in summoning her to prove herself before the full assembly (verse nos. 79-81 herein below). Here, the reputation of the sage was also at stake as much as that of Sita. He had sheltered her during her exile in the forest which is similar to her living in Ravana's place in far away Lanka, i.e. away from her husband.

When the sage heard the reason why Lord Ram had left her, he was extremely angry and peeved, and wanted to prove to the world how wrong every accuser was. If they can cast doubts on Sita's character because she lived away from her husband in Ravana's place, then they can also cast aspersions on sage Valmiki, scandalising that the two sons of Sita were not Lord Ram's but of any of the many sages who lived in and around sage Valmiki's hermitage, if not of the sage himself.

When Lord Ram declined to outright accept the exalted sage Valmiki's advice to accept Lava and Kusha as well as their mother, it is quite certain that it did not go down well with the sage as it was plain and simple disobedience. Was sage Valmiki lying; didn't Lord Ram trust him; was he an ordinary run-of-the-mill ascetic, and not one of the most revered and great sages of the time? How dare anyone could disobey him, and especially Lord Ram who was expected to have great respect for enlightened sages, and whose father, king Dashrath, was Valmiki's friend (refer: canto 14, verse no. 74)?

Sage Valmiki's annoyance with Lord Ram was aggravated when the Lord gave the reason for abandoning Sita--that she has lived for a long time with another man who was not her husband (i.e. with Ravana). The sage was not a fool not to understand the gravity of the matter. Sita had been living in his hermitage away from her husband, and it was in his hermitage that her two sons were born. If the rascals could accuse her of infidelity because she lived away from her husband in Ravana's custody in Lanka, then what guarantee was there that the same set of rascals won't raise doubts about her purity while she lived in the sage's custody in his hermitage?

Therefore, the sage put all his spiritual achievements and religious merits at stake to hit back at Lord Ram, as well as those rascals who had no other pastime than to blink at others and raise suspicions about their characters without bothering to find out the truth, by asking Sita to go through another round of proving her innocence and integrity because the sage was certain that she would emerge unscathed.

There were other reasons too why sage Valmiki became extremely annoyed with Lord Ram. One, the Lord had organised a huge horse sacrifice in which all the sages from the four quarters or corners of the world were invited (refer: canto 15, verse no. 59). Why didn't he invite sage Valmiki? In fact, the sage should have been at the head of the list of invitees as he had given shelter to Sita, the queen of the kingdom and the wife of Lord Ram, something which in itself was enough to extend a special privileged invitation to the sage. Besides this angle, Valmiki was amongst the handful of great sages of the era, the others being Bharadwaj, Atri and Agastya (also known as sage Kumbhaj). All these sages were enlightened, self-realised and spiritually attained, and all of them had established their own hermitages where other sages, ascetics and hermits came to live to pursue their spiritual life as well as to learn about spiritualism and metaphysics.

The second reason is this: Why did Lord Ram not send any kind of help to the sage in material terms by way of donation, especially when he was aware this his wife has been given shelter by the sage when she had no one else to take care of her? This was specially offending because everyone praised Lord Ram as a king who was a merciful 'Prajapalak', i.e. a king who was compassionate and helpful to his subjects, and who did everything possible to take care of his subjects. Couldn't the Lord think that some kind of material help should be sent to sage Valmiki's hermitage so that he finds it easier to take care of the inmates living in his hermitage. Sita was not alone, there were many disciples of the sage, as well as daughters and lady seers and ascetics living there (refer: canto 14, verse no. 77; canto 15, verse no. 74).

Third: Why sage Valmiki alone, why could not Lord Ram--who had no compunctions or reservations in opening his purse-strings to liberally fund a large ceremony of the horse sacrifice--not spare some fund to send donations by way of charity to the hermitages of other sages, hermits and ascetics that were located within his realm? Was the Lord not famous and feted for being large-hearted, magnanimous, charitable and

compassionate, or was he in reality a miser and self-pleasing selfish ruler who would splurge money where he got fame, and bite his teeth into each penny when it came to real and selfless charities?

In short, there was a cumulative collection of reasons that culminated in upsetting sage Valmiki. It will be seen shortly that when Lord Ram refused to heed the sage's advice to accept Lava and Kusha as his sons without Sita first proving herself in open court, the sage's anger would burst out in the open later on though he presently maintained decorum and dignity of both his own stature as well as that of Lord Ram because the latter was a 'king' of a great kingdom, a descendant of a noble line of kings coming down for ages from the ancient king Ikshwaku, and thirdly because Lord Ram himself was above reproach.

So therefore, when the sage took Sita with him to the Lord's court the next day, he avoided all formalities and bluntly came to the point by curtly asking Sita to stand up and prove her innocence before the full assembly (verse nos. 75-76, 79-80).

This was indeed a shameful event in the entire history of the honourable Ikshwaku dynasty--that a queen is made to prove her chastity, integrity and loyalty in full public view, before staring eyes, while her husband sat silently as a mute and impotent witness to this contemptible and reprehensible drama being enacted right under his nose, and not doing anything to stop it as he himself was responsible for the unfolding of this calamitous, sordid, and most ignominious event in the annals of the entire history of this famous race descending from kings Ikshwaku and Raghu.

And finally, here comes the fourth reason of sage's annoyance with Lord Ram. When the sage asked Sita before the assembly to prove her self, could not Lord Ram--let us not forget that he was a king whose word was deemed to be final in any dispute in a royal court over which he presided--immediately stand up and stop Sita from proceeding ahead by declaring that there was no need for her to prove her innocence because since sage Valmiki was vouching on her behalf, it was enough proof of her innocence; no further proof was needed. But unfortunately, Lord Ram sat silently, unmoved.

Further, at this point of time, his friends Sugriv and Vibhishan were also present, as they had come to participate in the ongoing horse sacrifice (refer: verse no. 58 herein above). These two had witnessed Sita's fire-test in Lanka, before the party boarded the Pushpak plane for Ayodhya. Couldn't Lord Ram tell them to stand up and say on oath that Sita had already proved herself before them in Lanka itself, prior to Lord Ram's accepting her? Why did he keep mum? Is it that he himself had some kind of reservations against her character?

Sita was closely watching these developments, and was extremely hurt at the attitude of her husband. She did not want to suffer any further humiliation, and she did not want to impose herself on the Lord because she felt he was simply trying some excuse to avoid getting associated with her again. This is evident when Sita simply vowed that if she was indeed pure, then let Mother Earth accept her in her bowls, at which the earth opened up and a magnificent throne came up on which sat the deity of the earth. The deity accepted Sita in her lap, and the throne sank in the bowls of the earth as Sita vanished for all times to come (refer: verse nos. 81-84 herein below).

Sage Valmiki had first become angry with Lord Ram when he discovered Sita left abandoned and to fend for herself on the banks of river Tamsa (refer: canto 14, verse no.

73). The subsequent developments as outlined herein above enhanced the sage's frustration with him.]

Verse no. 75:

अन्येद्युरथ काकुत्स्थः संनिपात्य पुरौकसः।
कविमाहवाययामास प्रस्तुतप्रतिपत्तये॥ १५-७५

anyedyuratha kākutsthaḥ saṁnipātya puraukaśaḥ |
kavimāhvāyayāmāsa prastutapratipattaye|| 15-75

15-75. The next day, Lord Ram called a grand assembly where all the citizens were asked to attend. He also sent a message for sage Valmiki to come (as was planned the previous day at the sage's hermitage--refer: verse no. 73 herein above).

Verse no. 76:

स्वरसंस्कारवत्यासौ पुत्राभ्यामथ सीतया।
ऋचेवोदर्चिषम् सूर्यम् रामम् मुनिरुपस्थितः॥ १५-७६

svarasaṁskāravatyāsau putrābhyāmatha sītayā |
ṛcevodarciṣam sūryam rāmam munirupasthitaḥ|| 15-76

15-76. Sage Valmiki took along Sita and her two sons, Lava and Kusha, and presented himself in the court of Lord Ram. While Sita was going to Lord Ram with Lava and Kusha by her side, it reminded one of the famed Vedic hymn (Richa) known as the Gayatri Mantra that was approaching its deity, the brilliant Sun God, along with its correctly pronounced syllables and the combined divine effect of the hymn.

[Note--The 'Gayatri Mantra' is dedicated to the Sun-God. It invokes the powers of the brilliant Sun, and is regarded as one of the most powerful, effective and holy Vedic hymn. The effectiveness of the Gayatri Mantra depends on the correct pronunciation of its syllables, with correct intonation, and with full faith in its powers and effectiveness. Otherwise, it is a meaningless collection of letters.

In this metaphor, Lord Ram is the Sun, Sita is the Gayatri Mantra, and her two sons Lava and Kusha, who were articulate in speech and perfect in their intonation as they sang the verses of the Ramayana taught to them by sage Valmiki, were like the syllables of this Vedic hymn being chanted with correct intonation, devotion and faith.

Again, as the Sun is the illuminator of the world, is the source of energy, a receptacle of celestial fire, and deemed to be untainted, so was Lord Ram. Since the Gayatri Mantra is exclusively dedicated to the Sun, so was Sita exclusively devoted to Lord Ram. And as the syllables of this hymn are to be pronounced articulately, without fumbling and fidgeting, so was the way in which Lava and Kusha would sing the verses of the Ramayana as well as the Vedic hymns that sage Valmiki had taught them. Its

indeed a fantastic imagery comparing Lord Ram, Sita and the two charming sons respectively to the Sun, the Gayatri Mantra, and the mesmerising effect it has when chanted rhythmically.]

Verse no. 77:

काषायपरिवीतेन स्वपदार्पितचक्षुषा।

अन्वमीयत शुद्धेति शान्तेन वपुषैव सा॥ १५-७७

kāṣāyaparivītena svapadārpitacakṣuṣā |
anvamīyata śuddheti śāntena vapuṣaiva sā|| 15-77

15-77. Attired in the ochre clothes of a hermit, and with her eyes lowered and fixed on her feet, Sita looked majestic and holiness personified with her calm and poised demeanours. {She showed no sign of uneasiness or tension of any kind. She walked with dignity and confidence, and appeared modest and humble.}

Verse no. 78:

जनास्तदालोकपथात्प्रतिसंहृतचक्षुषः।

तस्थुस्तेऽवाङ्मुखाः सर्वे फलिता इव शालयः॥ १५-७८

janāstadālokapathātpṛtisaṁhṛtacakṣuṣaḥ |
tasthuste'vāṁmukhāḥ sarve phalitā iva śālayaḥ|| 15-78

15-78. When the citizens saw Sita, all of them lowered their heads in shame that they had falsely and without any ground accused this innocent and chaste lady with wrongdoing. With their lowered head the rows of citizens looked like rows of paddy-blades that have bent sideways under the weight of their grains.

[Note--The grains here refer to the guilt of the citizens which had weighed down heavily on their collective conscience. They sat with lowered heads burdened by the weight of this guilt. The citizens avoided seeing her in the eye, and sat gloomily as if they were about to witness a disastrous event for which they themselves were responsible. And indeed it was so, for soon we shall read that Sita entered the bowls of the earth, and in due course of time Lord Ram too left this world along with his brothers (canto 15, verse nos. 98-103, and the city of Ayodhya, which was once a prosperous and wealthy city, was laid to ruin and decayed over time (canto 17, verse nos. 10-21).]

Verse no. 79:

ताम् दृष्टिविषये भर्तुर्मुनिरास्थितविष्टरः।

कुरु निःसंशयम् वत्से स्ववृत्ते लोकमित्यशात्॥ १५-७९

tām dr̥ṣṭiṣaye bharturmunirāsthitaṣṭaraḥ |
kuru niḥsaṁśayam vatse svavṛtte lokamityaśāt|| 15-79

15-79. Sage Valmiki, who was seated on his seat, told Sita: "My daughter (vatse)! Remove the doubt that the citizens have regarding your character in the presence of your husband who shall bear witness to it."

Verse no. 80:

अथ वाल्मीकिशिष्येण पुण्यमावर्जितम् पयः।
आचम्योदीरयामास सीता सत्याम् सरस्वतीम्॥ १५-८०

atha vālmīkiśiṣyeṇa puṇyamāvarjitam payaḥ |
ācamyodīrayāmāsa sītā satyām sarasvatīm|| 15-80

15-80. Then, Sita sipped some holy water that was poured in her cupped palm by a disciple of sage Valmiki, and then raising her other hand she made a solemn declaration as follows--

Verse no. 81:

वाङ्मनःकर्मभिः पत्यौ व्यभिचारो यथा न मे।
तथा विश्वंभरे देवि मामन्तर्धातुमर्हसि॥ १५-८१

vānmanahkarmabhiḥ patyau vyabhicāro yathā na me |
tathā viśvaṁbhare devi māmantardhātumarhasi|| 15-81

15-81. Sita declared: "If I had never violated my vows of loyalty towards my husband (Lord Ram), if I had never been unfaithful to him in any way, by my words, by my actions and by my thoughts--then, oh Mother Earth, please accept me in your lap."

[Note--It was a very poignant moment. Sita did not want to face the same humiliation again in her life. She was dismayed at Lord Ram's attitude towards her, and especially because he had turned a deaf ear to her pleas that Laxman, she was sure, must have conveyed to him (refer: canto 14, verse nos. 61-68). It was humiliation at its worst that even though the exalted sage Valmiki had himself vouched for the purity of her character (refer: canto 14, verse no. 74; canto 15, verse no. 71), and her husband had himself acknowledged it (canto 15, verse no. 72), yet he still doubted her and is compelling her to publicly display her integrity (canto 15, verse no.73).

In these situations, what guarantee was there that she would be allowed to live a free and honourable life if she agrees to return home to Ayodhya? Was it not better to die than face sneers and taunts all her life? She decided that she would not go back to her husband who did not have any compassion for her, who had found an excuse to abandon her because in all probability he himself privately doubted her infidelity. If not, then why

did he make her undergo a fire test in Lanka before accepting her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108-to Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 109. Also refer to Kalidas' Raghuvansham, Canto 12, verse no. 104 where it is briefly mentioned.}}

Verse no. 82:

**एवमुक्ते तया साध्व्या रन्धात्सद्योभवाद्भुवः।
शातह्रदमिव ज्योतिः प्रभामण्डलमुद्ययौ॥ १५-८२**

evamukte tayā sādhyā randhrātsadyobhavādbhuvah |
śātahradamiva jyotiḥ prabhāmaṇḍalamudyayau|| 15-82

15-82. No sooner had Sita made this solemn declaration, than the earth beneath her feet split into two, and from the gap emerged a column of dazzling light that shone with the blinding brilliance of lightening (that emanates from the clouds).

[Note--There was a mighty rumble as if an earthquake was about to occur. Then the earth split from under Sita's feet and a streak of dazzling column of light emerged from this gap.]

Verse no. 83:

**तत्र नागफणोत्क्षिप्तसिंहासननिषेदुषी।
समुद्ररशना साक्षात्प्रादुरासीद्वसुंधरा॥ १५-८३**

tatra nāgaphaṇotkṣiptasimhāsananiṣeduṣī |
samudraraśanā sākṣātpṛādurāsīdvasuṁdharā|| 15-83

15-83. On the crest of that brilliant column of light there was a splendorous throne supported on the hoods of a serpent. On this throne sat the deity representing Mother Earth. She wore a girdle represented by the ocean.

[Note--The oceans surround the earth, hence the deity representing the earth too had a circular ornament around her waist in the form of a tube-like girdle filled with water.]

Verse no. 84:

**सा सीतामङ्कमारोप्य भर्तृप्रणिहितेक्षणाम्।
मामेति व्याहरत्येव तस्मिन्पातालमभ्यगात्॥ १५-८४**

sā sītāmaṅkamāropya bhartṛpraṇihitekṣaṇām |
māmeti vyāharatyeva tasminpātālamabhyagāt|| 15-84

15-84. The deity invited Sita to sit on her lap, and soon thereafter, the throne sank in the bowls of the earth and the hole closed. Sita stared at Lord Ram with unblinking eyes as if to say final goodbye (as well as to vent her subdued anger at him) even as the stunned Lord said in horror 'stop, stop, what is this'. But it was to no avail, as by the time the Lord could react and lunge forward to catch Sita in his desperation to save her from sinking in the hole, she had already vanished into the deep bowls of the earth (the Patal Loka) and gone forever.

[Note--During the final moments, Sita glared at Lord Ram and looked directly into his eyes, as if saying goodbye to him without uttering a word, as well as condemning him for all the ignominious events that has led her to make a decision to die. On the one hand she was overcome with grief and sadness, so her eyes might have been blurred with tears, and on the other hand she was so dismayed and angry at her husband that he mistrusted her that her eyes appeared to be burning red with a fire of disdain and repugnance for him. Surely it would have been a mixed feeling of both a grief-laden last goodbye, as well as a look of loathing for him because she had been subjected to excessive humiliation just because some inconsequential citizen said some nasty thing about her, and that her husband had preferred to punish her instead of the scandalous, lowly and irresponsible accuser. What a shame!]

Verse no. 85:

धरायाम् तस्य संरम्भम् सीताप्रत्यर्पणैषिणः।

गुरुर्विधिबलापेक्षी शमयामास धन्विनः॥ १५-८५

dharāyām tasya saṁrambham sītāpratyaṛpaṇaiṣiṇaḥ |
gururvidhibalāpekṣī śamayāmāsa dhanvinaḥ|| 15-85

15-85. Lord Ram was extremely exasperated and unnerved, and became very angry at Mother Earth when he realised that the deity of the earth had herself come to take Sita away from him for all times to come (as narrated in verse nos. 82-84 herein above).

Peeved, ashamed at himself and overcome with guilt at his hypocritical actions (of abandoning Sita in order to prove to his slanderous subjects that he himself was beyond reproach), which had culminated in this sad development that had permanently separated him from Sita, and unable to restrain himself any longer, he raised his bow to punish the earth and pierce it with his formidable arrows so as to rupture it and split into smithereens, and to pull out Sita from the bowls of the earth wherever she might be.

At that moment, sages Vashistha and Valmiki intervened to console Lord Ram, calm him down, and soothe his hurt feelings. They prevailed upon him and gave him wise council so as to disarm him, and not get distracted from the path of Dharma by sentiments or emotions, saying that the will of the all-powerful destiny cannot be countermanded; no one can go against what is written in one's fate and ordained by destiny; no living being is exempt from the writ of destiny; no one is above the dictate of destiny. {To wit, it is futile to go against laws of Creation and Nature, that anything or

anyone that is born is bound to depart from this mortal world, and no one is above this sacrosanct law of creation.}

One must therefore, they told Lord Ram, patiently accept what destiny commands, and he should particularly be very careful not to go against it because he is the flag-bearer of Dharma in all its forms (i.e. rules of right conduct and propriety in all spheres of life). He is expected to set an example for others to follow with respect to the virtues of calmness, dispassion, renunciation, self-discipline, wisdom, patience, forbearance, fortitude, and a sense of righteousness and propriety of action and behaviour in matters of public as well as personal life.

Being impatient and taking any rough action driven by emotions on the spur of the moment is never a good thing to do.

Verse no. 86:

ऋषीन्विसृज्य यज्ञान्ते सुहृदश्च पुरस्कृतान्।
रामः सीतागतम् स्नेहम् निदधे तदपत्ययोः॥ १५-८६

ṛṣīnvisṛjya yajñānte suhṛdaśca puraskṛtān |
rāmaḥ sītāgatam sneham nidadhe tadapatyayoḥ|| 15-86

15-86. Somehow, Lord Ram finished his horse sacrifice and bid goodbye to all the guests such as the invited sages and his friends. After that, the Lord showered a bounty of his love and affection on his two sons (Lava and Kusha) as he would have shown to Sita (ensuring that they are kept so happy, engaged and entertained that they would not miss their mother).

[Note--The two beautiful and sweet sons reminded Lord Ram of Sita, and in her absence, and driven by a desire of repentance for the wrong done to her, he poured all his bounty of love and affection on the two lovely sons, Lava and Kusha. They were pampered and taken good care of. The Lord ensured that they would get so much love and caring attention from him that they would not miss their mother.]

Verse no. 87:

युधाजितस्य संदेशात्स देशम् सिन्धुनामकम्।
ददौ दत्तप्रभावाय भरताय भृतप्रजः॥ १५-८७

yudhājitasya saṁdeśātsa deśam sindhunāmakam |
dadau dattaprabhāvāya bharatāya bhṛtaprajah|| 15-87

15-87. Lord Ram, who was ever ready to look after the welfare of his subjects, granted the full sovereign authority over the kingdom of Sindhu to his influential brother Bharat, as advised by the maternal uncle of Bharat.

Verse no. 88:

भरतस्तत्र गन्धर्वान्युधि निर्जित्य केवलम्।
आतोद्यम् ग्राहयामास समत्याजयदायुधम्॥ १५-८८

bharatastatra gandharvānyudhi nirjitya kevalam |
ātodyam grāhayāmāsa samatyājayadāyudham|| 15-88

15-88. Bharat vanquished the Gandharvas (classical musicians of heaven who were previously rulers of this kingdom) and disarmed them by taking away their bows, but left the musical instrument called the lute with them so that they could carry on with their profession of singing and playing music.

[Note--The kingdom of Sindhu was situated on both sides of river Indus. Previously, the Gandharvas had a hold over this area. So Bharat disarmed them by taking away their weapon, the bow, but let them retain their hereditary musical instrument the lute so that they can carry on with their profession as musicians and singers.]

Verse no. 89:

स तक्षपुष्कलौ पुत्रौ राजधान्योस्तदाख्ययोः।
अभिषिच्याभिषेकार्हौ रामान्तिकमगात्पुनः॥ १५-८९

sa takṣapuṣkalau putrau rājadhānyostadākhyayoḥ |
abhiṣicyābhiṣekārḥau rāmāntikamagātpunaḥ|| 15-89

15-89. Bharat had two sons named Taksha and Pushkal. He established two independent capitals named after the two sons, i.e. 'Takshashila' after his son Taksha, and 'Pushkalawati' after his son Pushkal. Having duly consecrated the two sons on these two newly founded capital cities, Bharat returned home to Ayodhya.

[Note--Earlier, Shatrughan had also done the same by establishing his two sons as rulers of two independent states and then returned home to Ayodhya. Refer: verse no. 36 of this canto 15 herein above.]

Verse no. 90:

अङ्गदम् चन्द्रकेतुम् च लक्ष्मणोऽप्यात्मसंभवौ।
शासनाद्रघुनाथस्य चक्रे कारापथेश्वरौ॥ १५-९०

aṅgadam candraketum ca lakṣmaṇo'pyātmasaṁbhavau |
śāsanādraghunāthasya cakre kārāpatheśvarau|| 15-90

15-90. On the instructions of Lord Ram, his brother Laxman anointed his two sons named Angad and Chitraketu as the rulers of the kingdom of Karapath (pronounced 'kārāpatha').

Verse no. 91:

इत्यारोपितपुत्रास्ते जननीनाम् जनेश्वराः।

भर्तृलोकप्रपन्नानाम् निवापान्विदधुः क्रमात्॥ १५-९१

ityāropitaputrāste jananīnām janeśvarāḥ |
bharṭṛlokaprapannānām nivāpānvidadhuḥ kramāt|| 15-91

15-91. In this way, after the four brothers had established their sons in their respective kingdoms, they completed the funeral rites of their late mothers who had joined their late husband, king Dashrath, in heaven.

[Note--Though it has not been mentioned anywhere when the mothers of Lord Ram (Kaushalya), Bharat and Shatrughan (Kaikeyi) and Laxman (Sumitra) died, but by the reading of this present verse it is abundantly that they were dead.]

Verse no. 92:

उपेत्य मुनिवेशोऽथ कालः प्रोवाच राघवम्।

रहःसंवादिनौ पश्येदावाम् यस्तम् त्यजेरिति॥ १५-९२

upetya muniveṣo'tha kālaḥ provāca rāghavam |
rahaḥsaṁvādināu paśyedāvām yastam tyajeriti|| 15-92

15-92. After all these worldly obligations were done with, one day the god of death disguised himself as a hermit and came to meet Lord Ram. He told the Lord that he wants to discuss something with him in private, and the condition was that if anyone comes before my talk with you is over, you shall abandon him right away. I need absolute privacy and confidentiality.

Verse no. 93:

तथेति प्रतिपन्नाय विवृतात्मा नृपाय सः।

आचख्यौ दिवमध्यास्व शासनात्परमेष्ठिनः॥ १५-९३

tatheti pratipannāya vivṛtātmā nṛpāya saḥ |
ācakhyau divamadhyāsva śāsanātparameṣṭhinaḥ|| 15-93

15-93. When Lord Ram gave him the necessary consent, then the god of death, known as 'Kaal', revealed his true identity to the Lord and told him that he has come on the instructions of the creator Brahma who had sent a message for the Lord that his time to wind up the affairs in the world has come, and that now he should ascend to heaven to live in his heavenly abode of Vaikuntha (the abode of Lord Vishnu who had manifested as Lord Ram).

Verse no. 94:

विद्वानपि तयोर्द्वाःस्थः समयम् लक्ष्मणोऽभिनत्।

भीतो दुर्वाससः शापाद्रामसंदर्शनार्थिना॥ १५-९४

vidvānapi tayordvāḥsthaḥ samayam lakṣmaṇo'bhinat |
bhīto durvāsasaḥ śāpādrāmasaṁdarśanārthinā|| 15-94

15-94. As was the dictate of destiny and the fiat of fate, while Kaal was talking with Lord Ram and Laxman was appointed by the Lord to guard the door so that no one walks in, right at that time a sage named Durbasa came to urgently meet the Lord. When Laxman tried to persuade him to wait a while as the Lord was engaged in some very confidential discussion with another guest, the sage, who was famous for his short temper and impatient nature, became furious, saying he can't wait, and if he is not allowed entry instantly he would curse everyone.

Laxman was aware of this sage's mercurial nature, so to avoid the sage from cursing everyone, Laxman thought it wise that he should go and inform the Lord even though it meant that as per the condition given to Kaal, it was a foregone conclusion that the Lord would abandon him (Laxman). But there was no other option left before Laxman.

Verse no. 95:

स गत्वा सरयूतीरम् देहत्यागेन योगवित्।

चकारावितथाम् भ्रातुः प्रतिज्ञाम् पूर्वजन्मनः॥ १५-९५

sa gatvā sarayūtīram dehatyāgena yogavit |
cakārāvitathām bhrātuḥ pratijñām pūrvajanmanah|| 15-95

15-95. Not allowing Lord Ram to become embarrassed by asking Laxman to leave and go anywhere he likes as per the condition laid down by Kaal (as narrated in verse no. 92 herein above), Laxman decided to voluntarily leave everything, and he went to the banks of river Saryu and gave up his mortal body by undertaking some Yoga exercise by which his Pran (life sustaining vital wind) exited from his body while his mortal remains were consumed by the self-ignited fire of meditation.

In this honourable way, Laxman kept the promise of his brother Lord Ram without putting the latter into an embarrassing situation of asking him to go, and at the same time indicated that the time of the end of the present generation has come.

[Note--Though it is not clearly articulated how Laxman died, but in all probability he collected firewood, lit a fire, sat on it, and withheld his breath. Soon, the end came.

Besides this immediate provocation of sage Durbasa, Laxman had long lost all interest in life after being compelled to become instrumental in the abandonment of Sita. Her wailings and lamentations haunted him day and night, and he was waiting for an opportunity to leave this wicked world. That opportunity finally came.

He had developed a lot of sympathy and empathy with Sita, and after quietly witnessing the subsequent developments, his respect for Lord Ram was also compromised to a great extent. It ought to be noted here that the Creator knew what went on in Laxman's heart, and so it was so arranged that while all other brothers left this world together, Laxman did not accompany them and went all alone wherever his destiny took him.]

Verse no. 96:

तस्मिन्नात्मचतुर्भागे प्राङ्नाकमधितस्थुषि।

राघवः शिथिलम् तस्थौ भुवि धर्मस्त्रिपादिव॥ १५-९६

tasminnātmacaturbhāge prāñnākamadhitasthuṣi |

rāghavaḥ śithilam tasthau bhuvi dharmastripādiva|| 15-96

15-96. When Lord Ram came to know about Laxman's death, he was completely devastated because he not only loved his younger brother like his own son, but treated him, along with his other three brothers, as an inseparable part of his life. With Laxman no more, Lord Ram felt as if a fourth part of his self had been sheared off him. He felt crippled and lame just like Dharma which loses one quarter of its whole identity and retains only three parts in Treta Yuga¹.

[Note--¹The word 'treta' itself means three parts. Dharma was blooming during Sata Yuga, then only three parts of it was left in Treta Yuga, which was further reduced to two parts in Dwapar Yuga (dwapar = two), and in Kali Yuga, only one half survived, resulting in darkness (Kali = dark).

The reason why Lord Ram had a special soft corner in his heart for Laxman is very obvious--it was Laxman who had gone with the Lord to the forest despite there being no compulsion for him to do so. He shared all the sufferings and pains of exile with Lord Ram and Sita. When Sita was abducted by Ravana and Lord Ram had been so dejected that he almost fainted, it was Laxman who gave moral support to the Lord and encouraged him not to lose hope, that if they made efforts then she would certainly be found and recovered. During the ferocious war of Lanka, Laxman stood by the side of the Lord and fought with him, suffering grave injuries in the process. Lord Ram trusted him the most, and with his death there is no wonder that Lord Ram's heart sank. He had

already lost his wife Sita, and with the loss of Laxman the Lord decided that there is no more attraction in living longer. To wit, Lord Ram lost the will to live any more.]

Verse nos. 97:

स निवेश्य कुशावत्याम् रिपुनागाङ्कुशम् कुशम्।
शरावत्याम् सताम् सूक्तैर्जनिताश्रुलवम् लवम्॥ १५-९७

sa niveśya kuśāvatyām ripunāgāṅkuśam kuśam |
śarāvatyām satām sūktairjanitāśrulavam lavam|| 15-97

15-97. Lord Ram who had a calm mind and took decisions after due thought, gave his son Kusha, who was a vanquisher of enemies much like a goad that can control even the wildest of elephants, the kingdom of Kushwati (in the northern half of the vast kingdom of Ayodhya).

To his other son Lava, who had such sweet manners and a pleasant voice that he could make his audience shed tears out of his wit, humour and pleasant talks, Lord Ram gave the other half of the kingdom with its capital at Sharaavati (also known as Shravasti).

[Note--The kingdom of Ayodhya was also known as Kosal. This great and extended kingdom was divided into two parts--viz. the northern Kosal with its capital at Shravasti was given to Lava, and the southern Kosal with its capital at Kushvati which was given to Kusha. Kushvati was situated on the slopes of the Vindhya mountain range.]

Verse no. 98:

उदक्प्रतस्थे स्थिरधीः सानुजोऽग्निपुरःसरः।
अन्वितः पतिवात्सल्याद्गृहवर्जमयोध्यया॥ १५-९८

udakpratasthe sthiradhīḥ sānujo'gnipurahsarah |
anvitaḥ pativātsalyādgṛhavarjamayodhyayā|| 15-98

15-98. After that, Lord Ram called his remaining two brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, and with a pot containing consecrated fire, called the 'Agni hotra fire', in the vanguard of the procession, the three brothers exited from the city of Ayodhya to embark on their last journey out of their favourite city. They headed northwards (towards river Saryu).

When the citizens heard that their beloved king has bid goodbye to the city on his final journey to heaven, they became impatient themselves to follow Lord Ram. So, the entire city emptied out as every person left his or her home and followed the Lord from behind.

Verse no. 99:

जगृहस्तस्य चित्तज्ञाः पदवीम् हरिराक्षसाः।
कदम्बमुकुलस्थूलैरभिवृष्टाम् प्रजाश्रुभिः॥ १५-९९

jagr̥hustasya cittajñāḥ padavīm harirākṣasāḥ |
kadambamukulasthūlairabhivṛṣṭām prajāśrubhiḥ|| 15-99

15-99. Lord Ram friends from Lanka and Kishkindha, i.e. the demons as well as the monkeys and bears respectively, also followed suit by following the Lord from the rear of the procession consisting of citizens of the city of Ayodhya.

The path on which Lord Ram walked had become wet by the tears that were shed by the countless citizens who followed him. These tears were large like fruits of the kadamba tree and the mukul tree (kadambamukula)¹.

[Note--¹The Kadamba tree is called 'burflower tree', and its botanical name is 'Neolamarckia cadamba'. It has large fruits.

The Mukul tree is called guggal tree in local dialect. Its botanical name is 'Commiphora wightii' or the Indian bedellium tree. Its more common name is 'common myrrh tree'.

The idea is that the citizens shed an abundance of tears that wetted the path on which the procession moved.]

Verse no. 100:

उपस्थितविमानेन तेन भक्तानुकम्पिना।
चक्रे त्रिदिवनिःश्रेणिः सरयूरनुयायिनाम्॥ १५-१००

upasthitavimānena tena bhaktānukampinā |
cakre tridivaniḥśreṇiḥ sarayūranuyāyinām|| 15-100

15-100. Lord Ram, who was always gracious towards his devotees, himself boarded a divine plane (probably the Pushpak plane) and went to his primary abode in the heaven¹, leaving the rest to use river Saryu as a ladder to heaven².

[Note--¹Though it is not explicitly mentioned here, but surely enough Lord Ram took his two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, along when he boarded the plane to heaven. It is simply unthinkable that the Lord went alone, leaving his two brothers, who were like a part of his own self, behind. Laxman had already gone to heaven a day earlier--refer: verse nos. 95-96.

²What is meant here is that anyone who wished to go to heaven would take a bath in the river Saryu that would pave his path to heaven, and those who had second thoughts would not take a bath and stayed behind. Lord Ram did not compel anyone to leave this world, it was their own choice. But the reality was that every single citizen of Ayodhya loved Lord Ram so much that to live without him was unbearable and unthinkable for

them. So therefore, everyone went to heaven so much so that the heaven became so overcrowded that Lord Ram had to establish a parallel heaven to accomodate everybody--refer: verse no. 102 herein below.]

Verse no. 101:

**यद्गोप्रतरकल्पोऽभूत्संमर्दस्तत्र मज्जताम्।
अतस्तदाख्यया तीर्थम् पावनम् भुवि पप्रथे॥ १५-१०१**

yadgopratarakalpo'bhūtsaṁmardastatra majjatām |
atastadākhyayā tīrtham pāvanam bhuvi paprathe|| 15-101

15-101. There was such a huge crowd on the banks of river Saryu as if a large number of cowherds had gathered to take their herds across the river at evening time. At that time of the day, the surface of the river is packed with cows and other cattle who swim across the water's surface to reach their sheds on the opposite bank of the river. This sight gave the place the name of 'go-pratara' (go = gau= cow, and pratar = swimming to reach the other side). And from that time, this spot became famous because anyone who wished to go to heaven can easily do it by bathing here.

[Note--This general rule does not mean that one spends his life sinfully in the hope that he would attain heaven by simply bathing in river Saryu. No, it will definitely not happen. What actually is meant here is that even if a person had done wrong in his life and realises that he had been doing wrong, then he must be given at least one chance for redemption if he is sincere about his repentance. So first of all he should repent for his sins, make amends, promise to himself that no matter what happens he would not commit sins any longer, and he must have the courage to stand before those whom he had wronged to ask for forgiveness, it is only then such a man should be given a chance to go to heaven. Once he has sincerely repented, then it should not be made to appear that the laws of Dharma are so blind and rigid and heartless as to have blocked the path to his liberation and deliverance for all times to come for some mistakes of his in the past; the person must be compassionately treated. This would also inspire others to give up their sinful lives and repent. Hence, the provisions mentioned in this verse--that anyone who bathes in the holy water of river Saryu would go to heaven--must be read and interpreted with a sensible mind, and not by blindly sticking to its words.]

Verse no. 102:

**स विभुर्विबुधांशेषु प्रतिपन्नात्ममूर्तिषु।
त्रिदशीभूतपौराणाम् स्वर्गान्तरमकल्पयत्॥ १५-१०२**

sa vibhurvibudhāṁśeṣu pratipannātmamūrtiṣu |
tridaśībhūtapaurāṇām svargāntaramakalpayat|| 15-102

15-102. The bears and monkeys, who were actually different gods who came down from the heaven to help Lord Vishnu successfully accomplish the task of elimination of the scourge of the cruel demons¹, also left their worldly forms and reverted back to their original forms as different gods.

Since everybody, i.e. all the citizens of Ayodhya (refer: verse nos. 98-101 herein above), wished to go to heaven to stay with their beloved Lord Ram, and all attained heaven, there was so much jostling and overcrowding there that the Lord had to plan and establish another parallel heaven to accommodate all of them².

[Note--¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187-to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 188; (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-32.

²Not a single person stayed behind even though Lord Ram had left the choice to them if they wished to go to heaven or stay behind when he declared that anyone who wished to go to heaven ought to first take a bath in river Saryu and then leave their mortal body--refer: verse no. 100. The citizens of Ayodhya loved their Lord so much that the very idea of living without the Lord in their midst was unbearable and unthinkable for them. That the whole of Ayodhya followed Lord Ram to heaven has also been narrated in detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9.]

Verse no. 103:

निर्वर्त्यैवम् दशमुखशिरश्छेदकार्यम्
सुराणाम्विश्वक्सेनः स्वतनुमविशत्सर्वलोकप्रतिष्ठाम्।
लङ्कानाथम् पवनतनयम् चोभयम् स्थापयित्वा
कीर्तिस्तम्भद्वयमिव गिरौ दक्षिणे चोत्तरे च॥ १५-१०३

nirvartyaivam daśamukhaśiraśchedakāryam surāṇām
viṣvakṣeṇaḥ svatanumaviśatsarvalokapraṭiṣṭhām |
laṅkānātham pavanatanayam cobhayam sthāpayitvā
kīrtistambhadvayamiva girau dakṣiṇe cottare ca|| 15-103

15-103. In this way¹, Lord Vishnu accomplished the work of eliminating the scourge of the evil demons lead by Ravana as requested by the gods.

At the time of his departure, Lord Ram asked Hanuman and Vibhishan to stay behind in this world. The Lord ordained that Hanuman live in the mountains of the Himalayas in the north, and Vibhishan establish himself in Mt. Trikoot where Lanka was present. In this way, Lord Ram established them as his two symbolic pillars to guard the realm from the north by Hanuman, and the south by Vibhishan.

After that, Lord Ram resumed his original form as the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being who represents the entire creation and embodies every aspect of it, the visible as well as the invisible, in his cosmic form.

[Note--¹As narrated in Kalidas' Raghuvansham, Canto nos. 10-15.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये पञ्चदशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvyē pañcadaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends this 15th Canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Chapter 3

Raghuvansham of Kalidas

The Descendants of Lord Ram

Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 16, verse nos. 1-88:

Introduction:

This Canto narrates the story of Kush (or Kusha), the elder son of Lord Ram.

Since Lord Ram and his three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, had two sons each, therefore there were eight cousin brothers who were direct descendants of Lord Ram and his three brothers. After Lord Ram and all his brothers departed for heaven, their off-springs, the eight cousin brothers of the family, got together and unanimously decided to make Kush, the eldest son of Lord Ram, as their leader and the senior-most member of their family grouping. It was in order and fitness of things that Kush was elected to become the leader and head of the extended family consisting of all the eight cousins, and represent them whenever it is needed, because in this family, brotherly love, mutual trust, goodwill, and dedication for each other had always been a tradition. Even their fathers, Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan had always lived together amicably, and Lord Ram was always treated by the rest of his brothers with the greatest of respect and honour.

Meanwhile, Ayodhya, the capital city of Lord Ram, had become deserted after the departure of Lord Ram and his three brothers to heaven, because the sons of all the four brothers had already been assigned independent capitals prior to the departure of their parents to heaven.

Kush was assigned the capital of Kushawati (refer: canto no. 15, verse no. 97). One night while he lay in bed and was feeling restless due to some inexplicable reason, he saw a shadowy female figure that suddenly appeared before him in the form of an apparition or spectre. This was the deity of the city of Ayodhya. She had a very sad and despondent look, wore unkempt clothes, her hairs were dishevelled, and she appeared weak and emaciated. When Kush asked her who she was and what was her intent to come to him, she introduced herself as the deity of Ayodhya. She told Kush that after his father, Lord Ram, left for his heavenly abode, the city, that was once very prosperous, opulent, flourishing and magnificent, had come to ruin and was completely in shambles. For Kush, being the son of such a great king as Lord Ram was, she further said, it was a shameful thing to happen, because it amounts to his neglecting the legacy of his father as well as of the whole race of the illustrious kings of the Raghu dynasty all of whom had made Ayodhya as their capital city. So, neglecting Ayodhya and letting it go to ruin was a great blight on his (Kush's) reputation.

The deity of Ayodhya asked Kush to return to the city of his ancestors, and restore it to its former splendour and glory. Kush agreed and he came back to Ayodhya, and soon the city sprang back to life, regained its vibrancy and glory. All its parks, gardens, palaces, market places, streets, lanes, homes, playgrounds, as well as its surrounding forests, groves and orchards were restored and re-done in a befitting manner.

One day, while Kush was enjoying water-sport in river Saryu, his most favourite ornament, the one which his father Lord Ram had personally given to him when anointing him as his heir and the king of Kushawati, slipped and fell in the river. All attempts to retrieve it failed. Then his wise advisors told him that it is sure that the king of the Nagas (pronounced 'Naa-gaas'; the subterranean kingdom of serpents) had taken it away. Furious, Kush stood on the banks of the river and took out an arrow that had the ability to exterminate all the creatures living in the depths of the water and underneath the surface of the earth. But before Kush could shoot it, the king of the Nagas, whose name was Kumud, came to the surface of the water. Kumud told Kush: "Oh Lord! My daughter was playing with a ball in the river. Once, when the ball was tossed in the air and she looked up to catch it, she saw your gem falling in the river like a bright star falling to earth from the heaven. Being naive and out of curiosity, she picked it up and brought it down with her. Now, please excuse all of us for this little demeanour, and accept your gem back along with the hands of my sister Kumudwati in marriage." Kush agreed, and from that day Kumudwati became his wife.

With this brief introduction of canto 16, now let us delve deeper and in detail into its narrative, verse-by-verse as follows:--

Verse no. 1:

अथेतरे सप्तरघुप्रवीरा ज्येष्ठम् पुरोजन्मतया गुणैश्च।

चक्रुः कुशम् रत्नविशेषभाजम् सौभ्रात्रमेषाम् हि कुलानुकारि ॥ १६-१

athetare saptaraghupravīrā jyeṣṭham purojanmatayā guṇaiśca |
cakruḥ kuśam ratnaviśeṣabhājam saubhrātrameṣām hi kulānukāri || 16-1

16-1. Meanwhile, the seven brave, courageous and warrior cousin brothers, Lava, Taksha, Pushkal, Subahu, Sukrit, Angad and Chitraketu, unanimously elected Kush, a very able and competent monarch, as their leader and the head of their extended family. Surely this was in fitness of things and perfectly in order because it had always been a tradition in the family that brotherly love, mutual affection, trust and goodwill and dedication was the hallmark in their relationships.

To commemorate this occasion, the seven cousin brothers gave Kush priceless gems as gifts.

[Note--Their fathers, Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, had always lived together most amicably, and they were inseparable from one another.

Kush and Lava were the sons of Lord Ram, Taksha and Pushkal were the sons of Bharat, Angad and Chitraketu were the sons of Laxman, and Subahu and Sukrit the sons of Shatrughan. Refer: Canto 15, verse nos. 31-32, 36, and 89-90.

Since Kush was the elder of the two sons of Lord Ram, so all other cousins unanimously elected him as their leader and head.]

Verse no. 2:

ते सेतुवार्तागजबन्धमुखैः अभ्युच्छिताः कर्मभिरप्यवन्ध्यैः।

अन्योन्यदेशप्रविभागसीमाम् वेलाम् समुद्रा इव न व्यतीयुः ॥ १६-२

te setuvārtāgajabandhamukhaiḥ abhyucchritāḥ karmabhirapyavandhyaiḥ |
anyonyadeśaprabhāgasīmām velām samudrā iva na vyatīyuh || 16-2

16-2. All the eight cousin brothers were very competent and able. Constructing bridges over rivers, farming, rearing of livestock and protection of cows, acquisition of elephants and taming them--all these activities that are regarded as duties of great kings were duly carried out by them. They lived a respectful life of tolerance, mutual respect and honour, always showing great respect to each other inasmuch as they never attempted to violate the boundaries of their cousin's kingdom by trespassing the border on any pretext, surreptitiously usurping land along the border, or trying to invade the kingdom.

It was like the case of the mighty ocean that, though occupying almost three-fourths (71%) of the surface of the earth, has always remained restrained and maintained its boundaries, for it never tried to misuse its dominant position to violate its shores and gobble up the rest of the earth by submerging the entire land in its waters. So likewise, although each of these eight cousins were able and strong enough to vanquish their adversary, but they observed exemplary self-restraint and never violated the sanctity of the boundary of kingdom of their other cousin brothers.

[Note--This strategic policy ensured that there was perpetual peace in their kingdoms, and brotherly love and familial bonding never came under strain.]

Verse no. 3:

चतुर्भुजांशप्रभवः स तेषाम् दानप्रवृत्तेरनुपारतानाम्।

सुरद्विपानामिव सामयोनिर्भिन्नः अष्टधा विप्रससार वंशः ॥ १६-३

caturbhujāṁśaprabhavaḥ sa teṣām dānapravṛtteranupāratānām |
suradvipānāmiva sāmayonirbhinnāḥ aṣṭadhā viprasasāra vaṁśaḥ || 16-3

16-3. Just like eight legendary elephants, called 'Diggaja', from whose heads oozed a viscous sap called 'ichor', had emerged during the sacrifices using the hymns of the Sama Veda in some ancient time, and these eight elephants shared the responsibility of guarding the eight corners of the world, so likewise the family of the descendants of the

incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram had been divided into eight branches to take care of the eight directions of the world.

[Note--The eight corners or directions of the earth are: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, and north-west.

It is believed that when the creator Brahma recited the Sama Veda, keeping the orb of the sun in one hand and a skull in another, there emerged eight elephants scheduled to guard the eight corners of the earth. Since they were created as semi-gods with a specific duty to support the earth, a scented thick liquid called ichor oozed from their foreheads, distinguishing them from the rest of the elephants of the animal kingdom. But since all earthly elephants are said to have been born out of them, they are also classified as eight in species. Likewise, the eight cousin brothers of Ram's lineage were now assigned the task of guarding the eight directions of the earth.]

Verse no. 4:

अथार्धरात्रे स्तिमितप्रदीपे शय्यागृहे सुप्तजने प्रबुद्धः।

कुशः प्रवासस्थकलत्रवेषाम् अदृष्टपूर्वम् वनितामपश्यत् ॥ १६-४

athārdharātre stimitapradīpe śayyāgr̥he suptajane prabuddhaḥ |
kuśaḥ pravāsasthakalatraveṣām adr̥ṣṭapūrvām vanitāmapaśyat || 16-4

16-4. At a certain point of time around midnight, while his servants were fast asleep and the night lamps were burning with a low flame in his bed-chamber, Kush lay awake on his bed as sleep eluded him. At that time an unnatural event occurred that astonished him—he observed that an apparition having a female form, whom he could not recognise as she was a complete stranger to him, had suddenly appeared in the room. She was forlorn, gloomy and despondent from her appearance, and dressed humbly like a sad woman whose husband is away on a long journey (leaving her lost in gloomy thoughts, and surrounded by a dark clouds of loneliness and worries).

Verse no. 5:

सा साधुसाधारणपार्थिवर्द्धः स्थित्वा पुरस्तात्पुरहूतभासः।

जेतुः परेषाम् जयशब्दपूर्वम् तस्याञ्जलिम् बन्धुमतो बबन्ध ॥ १६-५

sā sādhusādhāraṇapārthivarddheḥ sthitvā purastātpurahūtabhāsaḥ |
jetuḥ pareṣām jayaśabdapūrvam tasyañjalim bandhumato babandha || 16-5

16-5. This female apparition joined her palms as a gesture of prayerful submission and stood before Kush who was radiant, and as gracious and magnanimous as Indra in doing good to gentlemen and humble people by using all the wealth and other resources at his disposal, and who was also powerful enough to be able to vanquish his enemies.

Verse no. 6:

अथानपोढागलमप्यगारम् छायामिवादरशतलम् प्रविष्टाम्।

सविस्मयो दाशरथेस्तनूजः प्रोवाच पूर्वार्धविसृष्टतल्पः ॥ १६-६

athānapoḍhārgalamapyagāram chāyāmivādarśatalam praviṣṭām |
savismayo dāśarathestanūjaḥ provāca pūrvārdhavisṛṣṭatalpaḥ || 16-6

16-6. Just like a mirror can reflect a person's face, giving the impression that another person is standing nearby although the person is all alone, this female form entered the bed-chamber of Kush and stood before him inspite of all the accesses, such as the doors and windows, being closed.

This greatly astonished Kush. So he got half up on his bed and looked at this shadowy figure intently, wondering who she was.

Verse nos. 7-8:

The following two verses form a couplet:

लब्धान्तरा सावरणेऽपि गेहे योगप्रभावो न च लक्ष्यते ते।

बिभर्षि चाकारमनिर्वृतानाम् मृणालिनी हैममिवोपरागम् ॥ १६-७

का त्वम् शुभे कस्य परिग्रहो वा किम् वा मदभ्यागमकारणम् ते।

आचक्ष्व मत्वा वशिनाम् रघूणाम् मनः परस्त्रीविमुखप्रवृत्तिः ॥ १६-८

labdhāntarā sāvaraṇe'pi gehe yogaprabhāvo na ca lakṣyate te |
bibharṣi cākāramanirvṛtānām mṛṇālīnī haimamivoparāgam || 16-7
kā tvam śubhe kasya parigraho vā kim vā madabhyāgamakāraṇam te |
ācakṣva matvā vaśīnām raghūṇām manaḥ parastrīvimukhapravṛttiḥ || 16-8

16-7, 8: Kush said to the female figure: "Oh lady! Although you have entered my bed-chamber unannounced, despite all doors and windows being closed, giving the impression that you have some kind of mystical or magical powers usually possessed by Yoginis (female ascetics who practice occultism), yet from your physical features and demeanours it seems unlikely. This is because Yogis are expected to be always cheerful and without worries, but you look under great distress, and overcome with sadness and despondency. (7)

Say then, oh auspicious lady (śubhe), who are you, who is your husband, and why have you come to me in the dead of night. But mind you before you open your mouth to answer me, that descendants of the Raghu race never allow their minds to wander and commit a moral sin by thinking of pursuing ladies unknown to them. {To wit, do not try to honey-trap me by any trick, for I am a very strict person, and if you think you can play fools with me, because I have become suspicious of you and your intentions as you have

come in the dead of night and without warning, then I will advise you to go away immediately, before my wrath destroys you.}" (8)

Verse no. 9:

तमब्रवीत्सा गुरुणानवद्या या नीतपौरा स्वपदोन्मुखेन।

तस्याः पुरः संप्रति वीतनाथाम् जानीहि राजन्नधिदेवताम् माम् ॥ १६-९

tamabravītsā guruṇānavadyā yā nītapaurā svapadonmukhena |
tasyāḥ purāḥ saṁprati vītanāthām jānīhi rājannadhidevatām mām || 16-9

16-9. The female apparition replied: "Oh king! I am the unfortunate presiding female deity of the flourishing city¹ where once your esteemed father (i.e. Lord Ram) used to rule. At the time of his departure for heaven, his original abode, all the city's inhabitants accompanied him, abandoning the once flourishing city² that eventually became lifeless and desolate, a land that now presents a pitiful, dark and forlorn look (that arouses sad emotions, regrets and sympathy in the eyes of the beholder). {This is why I look so sad and distressed.}

[Note—¹Obviously, that city was Ayodhya.

²Refer: Canto 15, verse nos. 98-102.]

Verse no. 10:

वस्वौकसारामभिभूय साहम् सौराज्यबद्धोत्सवया विभूत्या।

समग्रशक्तौ त्वयि सूर्यवंश्ये सति प्रपन्ना करुणामवस्थाम् ॥ १६-१०

vasvaukasārāmabhibhūya sāham saurājyabaddhotsavayā vibhūtyā |
samagraśaktau tvayi sūryavaṁśye sati prapannā karuṇā mavasthām || 16-10

16-10. During early times in my heydays, when your ancestors presided over the kingdom and made the city (of Ayodhya) as their capital, I was so fabulous, so splendid, so resplendent with beauty and magnificence, so prosperous and so much flush with glory that even Alkapuri, the heavenly city of gods, faded before me, and it was no match before me.

But alas, all that is gone, and in spite of a great monarch like you still living as a direct descendant and representative of that same glorious family which once ruled over me (i.e. the city of Ayodhya which I represent), I have come to such a shocking state of ruin, neglect and disrepair! {It obviously is a great blight on your reputation.}

Verse no. 11:

विशीर्णतल्पाट्टशतो निवेशः पर्यस्तशालः प्रभुणा विना मे।
विडम्बयत्यस्तनिमग्नसूर्यम् दिनान्तमुग्रानिलभिन्नमेघम् ॥ १६-११

viśīrṇatalpāṭṭaśato niveśaḥ paryastaśālah prabhunā vinā me |
viḍambayatyanimagnasūryam dināntamugrānilabhinnamegham || 16-11

{The deity of Ayodhya now goes on to describe the neglected, dilapidated and crumbling state of affairs of the city that once rivalled Alkapuri in its splendour, beauty, magnificence, opulence and prosperity.}

16-11. With my Lord Ram no more to give protection to me and take care of my welfare (i.e. of the city of Ayodhya), the situation has become so alarming that hundreds of magnificent buildings have crumbled and reduced to rubble. My habitat looks as desolate and gloomy as an evening of sunset when everything is still and the wind spreads a blanket of clouds all over the sky.

Verse no. 12:

निशासु भास्वत्कलनूपुराणाम् यः संचरोऽभूदभिसारिकाणाम्।
नदन्मुखोल्काविचितामिषाभिः स वाहयते राजपथः शिवाभिः ॥ १६-१२

niśāsu bhāsvatkalanūpurāṇām yaḥ saṁcaro'bhūdabhisārikāṇām |
nadanmukholkāvicitāmiṣābhiḥ sa vāhyate rājapathaḥ śivābhiḥ || 16-12

16-12. The streets and avenues which used to be once well lit during the night, and on which young ladies wearing anklets from which a soft sound of jingling of small bells attached to them emanated as they walked during the night--these same streets and avenues are now infested by howling female jackals from whose mouths sparks emanate when they grind their teeth.

Verse no. 13:

आस्फालितम् यत्प्रमदाकराग्रैः मृदङ्गधीरध्वनिमन्वगच्छत्।
वन्यैरिदानीम् महिषैस्तदम्भः शृङ्गाहतम् क्रोशति दीर्घिकाणाम् ॥ १६-१३

āsphālitam yatpramadākarāgraiḥ mṛdaṅgadhīradhvanimanvagacchat |
vanyairidānīm mahiṣaistadambhaḥ śṛṅgāhatam krośati dīrghikāṇām || 16-13

16-13. The erstwhile clean and scented water of the large public water-tanks (or ponds) of the city used to dance in waves when young damsels played water-sport in them to the accompaniment of musical instruments, such as the tabor or the drum, which they would play with their own hands. These same water-bodies now present a gloomy picture: they mournfully resonate with the sound of bellowing of wild buffaloes as they madly splash

in the water and churn it with their horns, turning the tanks muddy, slushy and stinking over time¹.

[Note—¹In ancient times, large cities and towns had large public water-bodies, like lakes, ponds and step-wells, where citizens would go for collecting water, washing, bathing, water-sport, and all other needs related to water. There were separate areas earmarked for the use of males and females. Usually, the area reserved for women had walls around them to ensure privacy. These water-bodies were well maintained and cleaned regularly. Steps led to the water for ease of access. These water-bodies were well-planned and managed by the state

There were designated separate places meant specifically for entertainment of women folk of the city who gathered there to play water-sport, and at the same time enjoy playing different types of musical instruments while doing so. The sound of these musical instruments used to resonate around the enclosure of the water-body, while the water-sports of the women used to create waves in the water that splashed on the surrounding steps to create a sound that appeared to sync with the sound of the musical instruments. The combined effect was very pleasant, entertaining and refreshing.

The city's deity laments before Kush that 'fate' did not like it; it became envious and jealous. Alas, she regretted, that it is so sad and unfortunate to behold that those same water-bodies are now filled with stinking and muddy water. Wild buffaloes rampage through them, creating a raucous with their bellowing and fighting inside the tanks, resulting in a fierce churning of the already dirty water to render it more slushy and turbid.

What was once a pleasant space for enjoyment, pleasure and entertainment has now come to decay, and has become a sore sight to behold.]

Verse no. 14:

वृक्षेशया यष्टिनिवासभङ्गात् मृदङ्गशब्दापगमादलास्याः।

प्राप्ता दवोल्काहतशेषबह्याः क्रीडामयूरा वनबर्हिणत्वम् ॥ १६-१४

vṛkṣeśayā yaṣṭinivāsaḥṅgāt mṛdaṅgaśabdāpagamādalāsyāḥ |

prāptā davalkāhataśeṣabarhyāḥ krīḍāmayūrā vanabarhiṇatvam || 16-14

16-14. Earlier, dancing peacocks would perch on small timber platforms hanging in homes and street corners that were especially deigned for this purpose, but now with homes crumbling and street corners neglected, such perching booths have vanished, forcing the peacocks to perch on branches of trees that have grown wildly all over the city. These peacocks used to dance earlier when musical instruments such as the 'mridang/mridung' (mṛdaṅga) was played as a routine matter, but now since the city is uninhabited, there is no one left to play the instrument, and consequentially the peacocks have also stopped dancing.

[Note--The 'mridang/mridung' (mṛdaṅga) is an ancient two-headed musical drum that was slung across the shoulder with the help of strings and played by beating on its two

sides with the fingers or palms of a musician, or by small sticks. Even today, it is primarily used in south Indian Carnatic music system, and in eastern India in temples dedicated to goddesses. It is carved out from a single hollowed block of jackfruit wood. It has a barrel like shape, with two drum heads of unequal size. The smaller head produces a higher-pitch, while the larger head produces a bass like sound.]

Verse no. 15:

सोपानमार्गेषु च येषु रामा निक्षिप्तवत्यश्चरणान्सरागान्।

सद्योहतन्यङ्कुभिरस्रदिग्धम् व्याघ्रैः पदम् तेषु निधीयते मे ॥ १६-१५

sopānamārgeṣu ca yeṣu rāmā nikṣiptavatyaścaraṇānsarāgān |
sadyohatanyāṅkubhīrasradigdhām vyāghraiḥ padam teṣu nidhīyate me ||
16-15

16-15. What more can I say to express my dismay--the steps of buildings on which once young ladies, who had painted or dyed their feet with red pigments, used put their feet as they ascended or descended these steps, are now coloured by the blood sticking on the paws of tigers after they have killed a deer.

{To wit, the once thriving city has been taken over by wild animals now who roam around freely. The flight of steps on stairs of buildings, private or public, which were once used by humans, are now used by tigers who drag their prey there to eat them.}

Verse no. 16:

चित्रद्विपाः पद्मवनावतीर्णाः करेणुभिर्दत्तमृणालभङ्गाः।

नखाङ्कुशाघातविभिन्नकुम्भाः संरब्धसिंहप्रहृतम् वहन्ति ॥ १६-१६

citradvipāḥ padmavanāvatīrṇāḥ kareṇubhirdattamṛṇālabhaṅgāḥ |
nakhāṅkuśāghātavibhinnakumbhāḥ saṁrabdhasimhprahṛtam vahanti ||
16-16

16-16. Once there used to be large paintings on canvas that were hung from walls of public places which depicted colourful and lively scenes of male elephants descending a pond of red lotus flowers, and female elephants welcoming them by offering these flowers held aloft their trunks with the help of the stalk of the lotus--alas, now lions wishing to hunt elephants lunge at the elephants depicted in these paintings, thinking them to be real animals, and in the process they tear apart the canvas by their claws, thereby ruining the lively scenes which once adorned the walls of the city.

[Note--As has been observed in the previous verse, the once vibrant city of Ayodhya has now become infested by wild animals such as tigers and lions.]

Verse no. 17:

स्तम्भेषु योषित्प्रतियातनानाम् उत्क्रान्तवर्णक्रमधूसराणाम्।

स्तनोत्तरीयाणि भवन्ति सङ्गान् निर्मोकपट्टाः फणिभिर्विमुक्ताः ॥ १६-१७

stambheṣu yoṣitpratīyātanānām utkrāntavarṇakramadhūsarāṇām |
stanottariyāṇi bhavanti saṅgān nirmokapaṭṭāḥ phaṇibhirvimuktāḥ || 16-17

16-17. In the many pillars of the public buildings of my city, there were painted sculptures of female figurines made for the purpose of artistic decoration. Nowadays, their paints have peeled off, and serpents that wrap around these pillars, thinking them to be sandalwood trees, leave their sloughs sticking to these pillars, giving an impression that these figurines have covered their bosoms by a thin veil in order to protect their modesty from further vandalism.

Verse no. 18:

कालान्तरश्यामसुधेषु नक्तम् इतस्ततो रूढतृणाङ्कुरेषु।

त एव मुक्तागुणशुद्धयोऽपि हर्म्येषु मूर्च्छन्ति न चन्द्रपादाः ॥ १६-१८

kālāntaraśyāmasudheṣu naktam itastato rūḍhatṛṇāṅkureṣu |
ta eva muktāguṇaśuddhayo'pi harmyeṣu mūrccchanti na candrapādāḥ ||
16-18

16-18. In the mansions of the city, once moonlight reflected from the smooth plaster and the glazed paint on their walls, but now the same buildings look dark and gloomy because no repair has been done, their plaster and paint have either peeled off or have developed patches of black, and grass has sprouted here and there on their surfaces.

Verse no. 19:

आवर्ज्य शाखाम् सदयम् च यासाम् पुष्पाण्युपात्तानि विलासिनीभिः।

वन्यैः पुलिन्दैरिव वानरैस्ताः क्लिश्यन्ते उद्यानलता मदीयाः ॥ १६-१९

āvarjya śākhām sadayam ca yāsām puṣpāṇyupāttāni vilāsinībhiḥ |
vanyaiḥ pulindairiva vānaraistāḥ kliśyante udyānalatā madīyāḥ || 16-19

16-19. In my heydays earlier, young ladies would delicately bend the flower-bearing creepers found abundantly in public gardens in order to pluck flowers, ensuring that the creepers do no break by this bending, but unfortunately now hordes of rampaging monkeys shake these creepers wildly like forest-dwelling tribes or savages who have no etiquette or good manners, who do not know how delicately flower-bearing plants are to be handled.

Verse no. 20:

रात्रावनाविष्कृतदीपभासः कान्तामुखश्रीवियुता दिवापि।
तिरस्क्रियन्ते कृमितन्तुजालैर् विच्छन्न धूमप्रसरा गवाक्षाः ॥ १६-२०

rātrāvanāviṣkṛtadīpabhāsaḥ kāntāmukhaśrīviyutā divāpi |
tiraskriyante kṛmitantujālair vicchanna dhūmaprasarā gavākṣāḥ || 16-20

16-20. Nowadays, one can't see the light of oil lamps shining in the countless windows of mansions during the night, nor are seen pretty faces of young damsels peering out of these windows during the day time, and neither can one see the scented smoke of sandalwood sticks or even the smoke of fire from a householder's hearth coming out of these windows any time of the day. Instead of these pleasant sights, what one sees now are thick cobwebs that form a virtual net covering the windows.

Verse no. 21:

बलिक्रियावर्जितसैकतानि स्नानीयसंसर्गमनाप्नुवन्ति।
उपान्तवानीरगृहाणि दृष्ट्वा शून्यानि दूये सरयूजलानि ॥ १६-२१

balikriyāvarjitasaikatāni snānīyasamsargamanāpnuvanti |
upāntavānīragṛhāṇi drṣṭvā śūnyāni dūye sarayūjalāni || 16-21

16-21. It makes my heart sad to see that no more offerings are made to gods on the banks of river Saryu, *nor is there any pleasant smell emanating from the water of the river when the scented ointments that women folk used to apply on themselves got dissolved in it at the time they took bath in the river. {*This part can be interpreted as follows also: --- nor is there any pleasant smell in the surrounding air from the scented ointments that women used to apply on themselves after taking a bath in the river.}

The huts made of cane that were erected on the banks of river Saryu for use during these activities, are also lying deserted and neglected due to disuse.

[Note--Small cabin-like huts were erected on the banks of river Saryu for the use of the citizens when they visited the river for some activity. People used to relax or keep their things in them when they went to the river to make offerings to gods, or by women folk to change clothes etc. when they went to bathe in the river.]

Verse no. 22:

तदर्हसीमाम् वसतिम् विसृज्य मामभ्युपेतुम् कुलराजधानीम्।
हित्वा तनुम् कारणमानुषीम् ताम् यथा गुरुस्ते परमात्ममूर्तिम् ॥ १६-२२

tadarhasīmām vasatim visrjya māmabhyupetum kularājadhānīm |
hitvā tanum kāraṇamānuṣīm tām yathā guruste paramātmamūrtim || 16-22

16-22. Just like your illustrious father Lord Ram had abandoned his primary form as Lord Vishnu and left his heavenly abode in Vaikuntha to come down to earth as a human being for the purpose of eliminating the scourge of the demons, and when the task was done the Lord went back to his original abode in the heaven, so likewise you are requested to leave your present capital of Kushawati and come to Ayodhya to restore the city of your ancestors to its former magnificence, glory and fame."

[Note--Implied in this request of the deity of Ayodhya was that if Kush wanted, he can always come back to Kushawati after restoring Ayodhya, or he could have two parallel capitals at these two places, spending time equally between them.]

Verse no. 23:

तथेति तस्याः प्रणयम् प्रतीतः प्रत्यग्रहीत्प्राग्रहरो रघूणाम्।
पूरप्यभिव्यक्तमुखप्रसादा शरीरबन्धेन तिरोबभूव ॥ १६-२३

tatheti tasyāḥ praṇayam pratītaḥ pratyagrahītprāgraharo raghūṇām |
pūrapyabhivyaktamukhaprasādā śarīrabandhena tirobabhūva || 16-23

16-23. Kush gladly accepted the deity's request, and told her he will do as asked. After hearing Kush giving his consent, the presiding deity of Ayodhya was very pleased, and she disappeared from sight.

Verse no. 24:

तदद्भुतम् संसदि रात्रिवृत्तम् प्रातर्दिवजेभ्यो नृपतिः शशंस।
श्रुत्वा त एनम् कुलराजधान्या साक्षात्पतित्वे वृतमभ्यनन्दन् ॥ १६-२४

tadadbhutam saṁsadi rātrivṛttam prātardivjebhyo nṛpatiḥ śaśaṁsa |
śrutvā ta enam kularājadhānyā sāksātpatitve vṛtamabhyanandan || 16-24

16-24. Kush narrated everything about this astonishing episode of the night to the elders in his royal court the next day (to seek their advise). All of them praised Kush and congratulated him; they told him unanimously that he was very fortunate that the presiding deity of the capital of his ancestors had chosen him herself as the next heir and ruler of the city of Ayodhya.

Verse no. 25:

कुशावतीम् श्रोत्रियसात्स कृत्वा यात्रानुकूलेऽहनि सावरोधः।
 अनुद्रुतो वायुरिवाभ्रवृन्दैः सैन्यैरयोध्याभिमुखः प्रतस्थे ॥ १६-२५

kuśāvatīm śrotriyaśātsa kṛtvā yātrānukūle'hani sāvarodhaḥ |
 anudruto vāyurivābhraṇḍaiḥ sainyairayodhyābhimukhaḥ pratasthe || 16-25

16-25. Kush handed over the administration of Kushawati to trusted and learned elders (i.e. the Brahmins) of his court, and soon departed for Ayodhya on an auspicious day with a large army following him just like the clouds follow the wind.

[Note--In this analogy, king Kush is likened to the wind, and his army that followed him from behind as the cloud that follows the direction shown by the wind. Another significant point is the use of the metaphor of the 'wind', implying that their movement was fast as the wind.]

Verse no. 26:

सा केतुमालोपवना बृहद्भिः विहारशैलानुगतेव नागैः।
 सेना रथोदारगृहा प्रयाणे तस्याभवज्जंगमराजधानी ॥ १६-२६

sā ketumālopavanā brhadbhiḥ vihāraśailānugateva nāgaiḥ |
 senā rathodāragrāḥ prayāṇe tasyābhavajjāṅgamarājadhānī || 16-26

16-26. During the long journey from Kushawati to Ayodhya, the huge army of Kush appeared to be an entire city on the move. The flags and banners of the army resembled the trees and creepers of a city's gardens, the mighty elephants with howdahs (seating platforms) on their backs were like hills with playgrounds on their summits, and the chariots with their high canopies and elongated fronts looked like big buildings with domes, pillars and patios.

Verse no. 27:

तेनातपत्रामलमण्डलेन प्रस्थापितः पूर्वनिवासभूमिम्।
 बभौ बलौघः शशिनोदितेन वेलामुदन्वानिव नीयमानः ॥ १६-२७

tenātapatrāmalamāṇḍalena prasthāpitaḥ pūrvanivāsabhūmim |
 babhau balaughāḥ śāśinoditena velāmadanvāniva nīyamānaḥ || 16-27

16-27. Just like the full moon pulls the ocean towards itself during a full-moon night, causing the ocean to rise high and reach for the shore with a lot of rumble, king Kush, who had a magnificent white royal canopy over his chariot, pulled his majestic army towards Ayodhya with a great amount of hustling and bustling, roaring, rumbling and trundling sounds made by its chariots, elephants, horses and men.

Verse no. 28:

तस्य प्रयातस्य वरूथिनीनाम् पीडामपर्याप्तवतीव सोढुम्।
वसुंधरा विष्णुपदम् द्वितीयम् अध्यारुरोहेव रजश्छलेन ॥ १६-२८

tasya prayātasya varūthinīnām pīḍāmaparyāptavatīva soḍhum |
vasuṁdharā viṣṇupadam dvitīyam adhyāruroheva rajaśchalena || 16-28

16-28. The earth seemed unable to carry the weight of Kush's army because, trying to maintain its balance, it tossed so much dust high into the air that it appeared that the dust reached the heaven and covered the path treaded by Lord Vishnu.

[Note--In this poetic way, the poet simply wants to say that a lot of dust was kicked up by the marching army, and this dust covered the sky from one end to another like a blanket of dark clouds high up in the sky.]

Verse no. 29:

उद्यच्छमाना गमनाय पश्चात् पुरो निवेशे पथि च व्रजन्ती।
सा यत्र सेना ददृशे नृपस्य तत्रैव सामग्र्यमतिम् चकार ॥ १६-२९

udyacchamānā gamanāya paścāt puro niveśe pathi ca vrajantī |
sā yatra senā dadṛśe nṛpasya tatraiva sāmagryamatim cakāra || 16-29

16-29. The different units of Kush's army, whether the ones which had gone ahead to clear the path and waited at the halting stations, or the ones that accompanied him on the march, or the ones that came in the rear to escort provisions and logistics as well as countless builders, architects, masons, labourers, artisans etc. needed to rebuild the city of Ayodhya--all of them appeared to be one whole, uniform mass of a huge army, stretching from one end to another as far as the eye could see.

Verse no. 30:

तस्य द्विपानाम् मदवारिसेकात् खुराभिघाताच्च तुरंगमाणाम्।
रेणुः प्रपेदे प्रथि पङ्कभावम् पङ्कोऽपि रेणुत्वमियाय नेतुः ॥ १६-३०

tasya dvipānām madavārisekāṭ khurābhighātācca turaṁgamāṇām |
reṇuḥ prapede prathi paṅkabhāvam paṅko'pi reṇutvamiyāya netuḥ || 16-30

16-30. King Kush's elephants secreted so much ichor (a thick scented liquid oozing out of the cells of the head in an adult male elephant) that it dripped on the ground and wetted the dust, preventing it from flying into the air and blocking sight, but when the horses

marched on this dust everything was undone, and the dust was kicked up once again to reach high up into the sky.

[Note--Examined closely, this verse points out to the arrangement of different units of the army. The elephant brigade led from the front, and behind them came the horses or the cavalry.]

Verse no. 31:

मार्गैषिणी सा कटकान्तरेषु वैन्ध्येषु सेना बहुधा विभिन्ना।

चकार रेवेव महाविरावा बद्धप्रतिश्रुन्ति गुहामुखानि ॥ १६-३१

mārgaiṣiṇī sā kaṭakāntareṣu vāindhyeṣu senā bahudhā vibhinnā |
cakāra reveva mahāvirāvā baddhapraṭiśrunti guhāmukhāni || 16-31

16-31. Somewhere in the journey, the army lost its way to Ayodhya, and split into many divisions in the valleys of Mt. Vindhyachal in order to search the path leading to their destination. These divisions would hoot, sound whistles and raise slogans loudly so as to signal their position to other divisions as well as to keep in touch with each other. The roar created by this mighty army in different directions around the valleys and caves of Mt. Vindhyachal as it searched for the right direction forward mimicked the roaring sound of river Rewa (also called river Narmada) that flowed in this region.

[Note--The Vindhyachal Mountain range spans across central India, dividing the land into north and south peninsula. It stretches approximately for 1000 km from eastern Gujrat state, through Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh states, till the western borders of Bihar and Jharkhand states.

River Rewa is also known as river Narmada. It is India's longest west-flowing river, spanning almost 1312 km, and originating at Amarkantak in the state of Madhya Pradesh, flowing east-to-west through a rift in the valley between Mt. Vindhya and Satpura ranges, and finally drains into the Arabian Sea in the west coast. This river forms a natural boundary between north and south river like Mt. Vindhyachal.

Kushwati, the capital of Kush, was in the southern part of the larger Koshal kingdom. It was located in the higher ridges and slopes of Mt. Vindhyachal.

Since in those ancient times there were no maps and other scientific navigation tools, so it often happened that travellers got lost on the way. In the present context, the army faced the same problem of getting lost on the way to Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 32:

स धातुभेदारुणयाननेमिः प्रभुः प्रयाणध्वनिमिश्रतूर्यः।

व्यलङ्घयद्विन्ध्यमुपायनानि पश्यन्पुलिन्दैरुपपादितानि ॥ १६-३२

sa dhātubhedāruṇayānanemiḥ prabhuḥ prayāṇadhvanimiśratūryaḥ |
vyalaṅghayadvindhyamupāyanāni paśyanpulindairupapāditāni || 16-32

16-32. That great king Kush, the wheels of whose chariot had become red by the metallic dust of Mt. Vindhyachal, and whose army made such a roar that even the sounds of trumpets were dulled, marched forward relentlessly, collecting gifts from local inhabitants on the way. The king and his army finally crossed the mountain range.

[Note--King himself as well as his troops were shown the path to Ayodhya by the local people of the region. This is obviously how they found the correct path inspite of getting lost earlier.]

Verse no. 33:

तीर्थं तदीये गजसेतुबन्धात् प्रतीपगामुत्तरतोस्य गङ्गाम्।
अयत्नबालव्यजनीबभूवुर्हसा नभोलङ्घनलोलपक्षाः ॥ १६-३३

tīrthe tadīye gajasetubandhāt pratīpagāmuttaratosya gaṅgām |
ayatnabālavajanībabhūvurhaṁsā nabholaṅghanalolapakṣāḥ || 16-33

16-33. King Kush and his army reached the point where a river that is equivalent to river Ganges in holiness (i.e. river Narmada) flows in the western direction through a rift between the Vindhyachal and Satpura ranges. Here, the army made a temporary bridge by making the elephants stand side-by-side in the upper region of the river so that entire army could cross to the other side of the river. At that time, the swans who flapped their wings and flew overhead looked as if so many whisks and ceremonial fans were being waved on the head of king Kush as an auspicious symbol of welcome.

[Note--River Narmada is regarded as holy a river as Ganges. Ganges does not flow in the western direction, for its route is towards the east as it passes through eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh, into Bihar and Bengal states, to finally enter the Bay of Bengal.

This obviously means that the phrase 'river Ganga moving westward' (pratīpagāmuttaratosya gaṅgām) mentioned in the text actually refers to river Narmada.

Elephants were stood side-by-side, their legs were tied, and wooden planks were placed and fixed with ropes on their backs which served as platforms, over which the entire army easily got across.]

Verse no. 34:

स पूर्वजानाम् कपिलेन रोषात् भस्मावशेषीकृतविग्रहाणाम्।
सुरालयप्राप्तिनिमित्तमम्भस्त्रैः स्रोतसम् नौलुलितम् ववन्दे ॥ १६-३४

sa pūrvajānām kapilena roṣāt bhasmāvaśeṣīkṛtavigrahāṇām |
surālayaprāptinimittamambhastrai srotasam naululitam vavande || 16-34

16-34. Proceeding ahead on their way to Ayodhya, Kush and his army then reached the banks of river Ganges which had swift currents. While crossing the holy river by boats¹, Kush bowed before the river and its deity to pay his respects because the sons of his ancestor, king Sagar, who were reduced to ashes due to the curse of sage Kapil, had found deliverance by the touch of the holy water of river Ganges (that was brought to them by severe penance and efforts made by Bhagirath)¹.

[Note--¹ A reference to crossing of the river Ganges by means of boats indicates that Kush and his army had reached the borders of the kingdom of Ayodhya. When Lord Ram had gone to the forest, he too had crossed river Ganges on a boat from the side of the eastern bank that faced Ayodhya to its other bank on the western side from where he had proceeded to the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj at Prayag. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no.100; (ii) Doha no. 101 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 105; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 106.}]

Since Kush was travelling in the reverse direction, he crossed river Ganges from the west side that faced the pilgrim city of Prayag, to the side facing Ayodhya in the east.

²This event of Bhagirath bringing river Ganges to help the sons of Sagar to find deliverance has been narrated in Canto 3, verse no. 50 of this book 'Raghuvansham'.]

Verse no. 35:

इत्यध्वनः कैचिदहोभिरन्ते कूलम् समासाद्य कुशः सरय्वाः।
वेदिप्रतिष्ठान्वितताधराणाम् यूपानपश्यच्छतशो रघूणाम् ॥ १६-३५

ityadhvanaḥ kaicidahobhirante kūlam samāsādya kuśaḥ sarayvāḥ |
vedipratiṣṭhānvitātādharaṇām yūpānapaśyacchataśo raghūṇām || 16-35

16-35. In this way, after travelling for some days, Kush reached the banks of river Saryu. There he could see large posts or pillars that his ancestors, the kings of the Raghu race, had erected to commemorate the many religious sacrificed they had done.

Verse no. 36:

आधूय शाखाः कुसुमद्रुमाणाम् स्पृष्ट्वा च शीतान्सरयूतरंगान्।
तम् क्लान्तसैन्यम् कुलराजधान्याः प्रत्युज्जगामोपवनान्तवायुः ॥ १६-३६

ādhūya śākhāḥ kusumadrumāṇām sprṣṭvā ca śītānsarayūtaraṅgān |
tam klāntasainyam kularājadhānyāḥ pratyujjagāmopavanāntavāyuh || 16-36

16-36. The pleasant breeze that carried the fragrance of flowers growing on trees shook the branches of those trees softly as if it was welcoming Kush to the capital city of his ancestors, and likewise the cool currents of river Saryu too played its part in welcoming the king and his companions by sending ripples towards them as the river's messengers, and also by removing their tiredness when they took bath in the river.

Verse no. 37:

अथोपशल्ये रिपुमग्नशल्यः तस्याः पुरः पौरसखा स राजा।
कुलध्वजस्तानि चलध्वजानि निवेशयामास बली बलानि ॥ १६-३७

athopaśalye ripumagnaśalyaḥ tasyāḥ puraḥ paurasakhā sa rājā |
kuladhvajastāni caladhvajāni niveśayāmāsa balī balāni || 16-37

16-37. King Kush, renowned for vanquishing his enemies, one who always took good care of his subjects and did whatever was needed for their welfare and well-being, who always thought of enhancing the glory of his family and race, and who was very valiant, strong and powerful, ordered his army, whose flags and banners fluttered in the wind, to pitch camp in the surrounding areas.

Verse no. 38:

तम् शिल्पिसंघाः प्रभुणा नियुक्ताः तथागताम् संभृतसाधनत्वात्।
पुरम् नवीचक्रुरपाम् विसर्गान्मेघा निदाघग्लपितामिवोर्वीम् ॥ १६-३८

tam śilpisaṁghāḥ prabhuṇā niyuktāḥ tathāgatām sambhṛtasādhanatvāt |
puram navīcakrurapām visargānmeghā nidāghaglapitāmivorvīm || 16-38

16-38. Just like the case of Indra (the king of gods and the commander of the clouds) orders the clouds to shower plenty of rain on the parched earth to make it green and vibrant with life once again after a long spell of dryness of summer, so likewise king Kush instructed his skilled architects, masons, labourers and artisans to rebuild and refurbish Ayodhya in order to restore it to its former glory, splendour and magnificence.

Verse no. 39:

ततः सपर्याम् सपशूपहाराम् पुरः परार्थ्यप्रतिमागृहायाः।
उपोषितैर्वास्तुविधानविद्धिः निर्वर्तयामास रघुप्रवीरः ॥ १६-३९

tataḥ saparyām sapaśūpahārām puraḥ parārthyapratimāgrhāyāḥ |
upoṣitairvāstuvīdhanavidbhiḥ nirvartayāmāsa raghupravīraḥ || 16-39

16-39. After that (i.e. after ordering his army to pitch camp, and his team of masons, labourers and artisans to start rebuilding Ayodhya), Kush engaged learned sages to perform formal religious rituals to show respects to Ayodhya and worship its deity, a due process that involved elaborate sacrifices. He also honoured expert architects and sculptors (vāstuvidhānavidbhiḥ) and assigned them the task to recreate the buildings and public places of the city with all their finery and magnificence, leaving no stone unturned in order to make Ayodhya a fabulous city and architectural wonder once again.

Verse no. 40:

**तस्याः स राजोपपदम् निशान्तम् कामीव कान्ताहृदयम् प्रविश्य।
यथार्हमन्यैरनुजीविलोकम् संभावयामास यथाप्रधानम् ॥ १६-४०**

tasyāḥ sa rājopapadam niśāntam kāmīva kāntāhṛdayam praviśya |
yathārhamanyairanujīvilokam sambhāvayāmāsa yathāpradhānam || 16-40

16-40. Just like a passionately loving person enters the heart of his beloved and makes it his abode, so likewise king Kush entered the newly erected and refurbished royal palace and took up residence there. He also made proper arrangements to house his ministers and courtiers in suitable residences.

[Note-- Kalidas has not given any timeline regarding how long it took for Kush to get the buildings repaired or reconstructed in Ayodhya. But obviously it must have been a reasonably long time because Ayodhya was a sprawling city, and most, if not all, of its buildings were in shambles or decaying in varying degrees of disrepair due to neglect as well as ravages of Time and Nature. But since it was a state project, all resources of the kingdom of Kush, with its capital at Kushawati, were employed with full force. It is also possible that mason, labourers, architects, sculptors, craftsmen, artisans et al from other kingdoms may have joined hands when news spread that skilled workforce was needed to reconstruct Ayodhya. So therefore, even if the speed of reconstruction was slow in the beginning, it gathered pace and rapidly progressed towards completion in a record time.]

Verse no. 41:

**सा मन्दुरासंश्रयिभिस्तुरंगैः शालाविधिस्तम्भगतैश्च नागैः।
पूराबभासे विपणिस्थपण्या सर्वाङ्गनद्धाभरणेव नारी ॥ १६-४१**

sā mandurāsaśrayibhisturāṅgaiḥ śālāvidhistambhagataiśca nāgaiḥ |
pūrābabhāse vipaṇisthapanyā sarvāṅganaddhābharāṇeva nārī || 16-41

16-41. In the marketplaces of Ayodhya, attractive merchandise and materials of different kinds were on display for sale; horses were tied in stables; elephants were tied to pillars in elephant quarters. In this way, having been restored to its former beauty and

magnificence, Ayodhya once again looked like a charming lady decorated with different kinds of ornaments.

[Note-- As news spread that a new city is coming up in Ayodhya, businessmen, traders, craftsmen, artisans, professionals of different fields--all came from far and near to set up their establishments in the city. They came and lived on, gradually populating the once barren city, making it vibrant with life once again.

Kush's army, which had till now been living in tents on the outskirts of Ayodhya, now entered the city and lived in barracks earmarked for them. This meant that the foot soldiers, horses, elephants and other supporting staff came to live within the city of Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 42:

**वसन्स तस्याम् वसतौ रघूणाम् पुराणशोभामभिरोपितायाम्।
न मैथिलेयः स्पृहयांभूव भर्त्रे दिवो नाप्यलकेश्वराय ॥ १६-४२**

vasansa tasyām vasatau raghūṇām purāṇaśobhāmabhiropitāyām |
na maithileyah sprhayāmbabhūva bhartre divo nāpyalakeśvarāya || 16-42

16-42. Ayodhya once again looked very beautiful, magnificent, charming and fabulous. King Kush, the son of Sita, the princess of Mithila (her father's kingdom) and the consort of Lord Ram, so thoroughly enjoyed living in Ayodhya that he had no more interest in living in heaven where beautiful Apasaras dwell, nor of acquiring the lordship of Alkapuri, the city of gods in heaven, with its abundance of precious gems, opulence and wealth.

[Note--Alkapuri is the capital of Kuber, the wealthy lord of heaven's treasury. It is famed for its opulence, and is the celestial residence of Yakshas (celestial spirits) and Gandharvas (celestial musicians). It rivals Amravati, the capital city of Indra, the king of gods and heaven.]

Verse no. 43:

**अथास्य रत्नग्रथितोत्तरीयम् एकान्तपाण्डुस्तनलम्बिहारम्।
निःश्वासहार्याशुकमाजगाम घर्मः प्रियावेशमिवोपदेष्टुम् ॥ १६-४३**

athāsyā ratnagrathitottariyam ekāntapāṇḍustanalambihāram |
niḥśvāsaḥāryāśukamājagāma gharmaḥ priyāveśamivopadeṣṭum || 16-43

16-43. Soon came the summer season. It reminded Kush of a ladylove whose upper body was draped in a shawl embroidered with gems, on whose fair bosoms hung garlands of pure pearl, and who wore so thin garments that even her breath would make them fly off.

[Note--Nowhere it has been narrated till now that Kush had married or had lovers, but later on in verse no. 54 herein below, we come across the word 'banita', which means either a wife, or a pretty woman of a king's court, or who someone who is the king's lover. This verse tells us that once Kush goes to enjoy some time in river Saryu in the company of 'banitas' (vanitāsakhasya).

Anyway, here the poet seems to simply emphasise the imagination of Kush when he would be alone and longing for someone to accompany him in his lonely days when he was far away from his own capital of Kushawati. We must always keep in mind that the narrator is Kalidas who enjoyed describing different aspects of erotica and exotica as an integral part of his narrative.]

Verse no. 44:

अगस्त्यचिहनादयनात्समीपम् दिगुत्तरा भास्वति संनिवृत्ते।
आनन्दशीतामिव बाष्पवृष्टिम् हिमस्रुतिम् हैमवतीम् ससर्ज ॥ १६-४४

agastyaciḥnādayanātsamīpam diguttarā bhāsvati saṁnivṛtte |
ānandaśītāmiva bāṣpavṛṣṭim himasrutim haimavatīm sasarja || 16-44

16-44. The occasional gust of cold wind blowing in from the northern mountains during the summer appeared to be due to melting snow, as if the deity of northern direction was rejoicing the warmth that marked the arrival of sun from the southern direction to the northern direction, and to express its joy the deity wept so much that its cool tears flowed down the slopes of the Himalayas in the north.

[Note--The poet here views the North and the South as two rival deities, both of whom love to have the Sun-God on their side. The Sun-God obliges them both by dividing the year in two parts, one part the sun spends in the southern direction, and the other half in the northern direction. The sun moves to the southern solstice and stays above the Tropic of Capricorn during the winter season, causing cold weather in the northern hemisphere. During summer, the sun moves to the northern solstice, and takes its position above the Tropic of Cancer. The word 'solstice' means to 'sit still'. In the context of the sun, it means that it is sitting right above either the tropic of Capricorn or the tropic of Cancer during its respective solstice.

In the context of the present verse, the poet simply means that during the summer months, the ice on the Himalayas melt, feeding rivers and making the wind cool.]

Verse no. 45:

प्रवृद्धतापो दिवसोऽतिमात्रम् अत्यर्थमेव क्षणदा च तन्वी।
उभौ विरोधक्रियया विभिन्नौ जायापती सानुशयाविवास्ताम् ॥ १६-४५

pravṛddhatāpo divaso'timātram atyarthameva kṣaṇadā ca tanvī |
ubhau virodhakriyayā vibhinnau jāyāpatī sānuśayāvivāstām || 16-45

16-45. Very hot days and very short duration nights of summer appeared to represent a husband and his wife who have become angry with each other, causing one to remain always agitated and the other sleepless in the night.

[Note--Both the husband and his wife remain agitated and lose their sleep if they are angry with each other. In this metaphor, therefore, the hot days that makes a person restless and agitated, as well as the short nights when a person gets less time to sleep and relax, represent both the husband and the wife.]

Verse no. 46:

दिने दिने शैवलवन्त्यधस्तात् सोपानपर्वाणि विमुञ्चदम्भः।

उद्दण्डपद्मम् गृहदीर्घिकाणाम् नारीनितम्बद्वयसम् बभूव ॥ १६-४६

dine dine śaivalavantyaḥstāt sopānaparvāṇi vimuñcadambhaḥ |
uddaṇḍapadmam gr̥hadīrghikāṇām nārīnitambadvayasam babhūva || 16-46

16-46. The water level in the tanks of homes and ponds in public places gradually began to recede in the heat of summer, exposing the moss-covered steps leading down to the surface of the water from the top. The level of water fell so low that now it could reach only till the waist of women who came to take a bath in the public ponds and large domestic water tanks.

[Note--The low level of water also frustrated the desire of ladies to play water-sport in ponds and large tanks. The water became turbid and unsuitable for use.]

Verse no. 47:

वनेषु सायंतनमल्लिकानाम् विजृम्भणोद्गन्धिषु कुङ्मलेषु।

प्रत्येकनिक्षिप्तपदः सशब्दम् संख्यामिवैषाम् भ्रमरश्चकार ॥ १६-४७

vaneṣu sāyaṁtanamallikānām vijṛmbhaṇodgandhiṣu kuṇḍmaleṣu |
pratyekanikṣiptapadaḥ saśabdām saṁkhyāmivaiṣām bhramaraścakāra ||
16-47

16-47. In the gardens, buds of the jasmine flowers began blooming, and the flower's sweet fragrance spread everywhere. In the evening, buzzing bees, attracted by the sweet scent, came in large numbers and alighted on the petals of the flower as if they were counting the number of flowers and petals in the garden.

[Note--The loud buzzing sound of the bees reminds the poet of official enumerators, sent by a government to count the number of citizens living in a city, talking with each other and interacting with householders. These enumerators would stop at each door of homes and go about their job like the bees stopping at each jasmine flower, alighting on its

petals, and buzzing aloud while going around doing their job of collecting pollen and nectar from these flowers.]

Verse no. 48:

स्वेदानुविद्धार्द्रनखक्षताङ्के भूयिष्ठसंदिष्टशिखम् कपोले।

च्युतम् न कर्णादपि कामिनीनाम् शिरीषपुष्पम् सहसा पपात ॥ १६-४८

svedānuviddhārdranakhakṣatāṅke bhūyiṣṭhasamdiṣṭaśikham kapole |
cyutam na karṇādapi kāmīnīnām śīriṣapuṣpam sahasā papāta || 16-48

16-48. The scratches made on the cheeks of ladies by the nails of their lovers (when these lovers tightly gripped the lady's cheeks while kissing her) formed shallow grooves along which drops of sweat dripped down.

The highly fragrant Sirsa flower (of the Albizia lebbek tree, also called the woman's tongue tree) that young women use to adorn their ears dry up quickly in the heat, but when the flower gets dislodged from the ear it cannot fall down because its filament gets stuck to the sticky viscous sap of the flower which had oozed out of it and formed a gluey ointment-type of layer around the ear and down the cheek of the lady.

[Note--The poet here describes vividly the effect of the heat of summer on people. Sweat and perspiration is a common feature in summer, and Kalidas has wonderfully described how a person's face looks when one sweats a lot in the heat of summer.]

Verse no. 49:

यन्त्रप्रवाहैः शिशिरैः परीतान् रसेन धौतान्मलयोद्धवस्य।

शिलाविशेषान्यधिशय्य निन्युर् धारागृहेष्वातपमृद्धिवन्तः ॥ १६-४९

yantrapravāhaiḥ śīśiraiḥ parītān rasena dhautānmalayodbhavasya |
śilāviśeṣānyadhiśayya ninyur dhārāgrheṣvātapamṛddhivantah || 16-49

16-49. Rich people spent the hot months of the summer season in specially designed rooms in which air was made to pass through closely latticed nets on which water would trickle down continuously so as to cool the atmosphere. For more comfort, seats and beds were made of stones which were washed by cool water that had scented sandalwood dissolved in it.

[Note--This verse tells us that even in those ancient times, people had 'water coolers' in their homes, though these water coolers were of large sizes and entire rooms were converted into one big water-cooler. To blow air, either such rooms in a house were selected where natural breeze came in from the outside, or manual pedal-based fans were installed which were operated by servants. The water needed to work the coolers came

through over-head water tanks, or water was periodically sprayed manually by the servants.

To avoid a stuffy and damp smell of a closed environment of these kinds of 'room-coolers', sandalwood water was used to wash the seats, as well as a little bit of it was added to the main water used to keep the cooling nets wet.]

Verse no. 50:

स्नानार्द्रमुक्तेष्वनुधूपवासम् विन्यस्तसायंतनमल्लिकेषु।

कामो वसन्तात्ययमन्दवीर्यः केशेषु लेभे बलमङ्गनानाम् ॥ १६-५०

snānāardramukteṣvanudhūpavāsam vinyastasāyaṁtanamallikeṣu |

kāmo vasantātyayamandavīryaḥ keśeṣu lebhe balamaṅganānām || 16-50

16-50. The passionate feelings of love and romance, of life and longing, that dominated the spring season faded away with the passage of time as the hot summer season took over. But the patron deity of these feelings would not relent, for it manifested its self in other ways, such as revealing its alluring form in the long hairs of maidens who opened their tresses while bathing at the end of the hot day, and then adorning the buns over their heads, formed by wrapping strands of dried hair tightly into a coil, by sticking jasmine flowers dipped in liquid perfume into them.

[Note--After harsh winter, life bounces back during the spring season when lovers wish to remain close to each other. But as summer approaches and temperature rises, physical closeness or proximity becomes stifling due to sweat and heat of the season. However, the deity of life and passions finds ways to keep its charms alive: it reveals its beauty and allure in the form of young damsels who untie their hairs when bathing in ponds and tanks, and then adorn themselves by sticking jasmine flowers dipped in perfume into the buns of dried hairs they make over their heads.]

Verse no. 51:

आपिञ्जरा बद्धरजःकणत्वात् मञ्जुर्युदारा शुशुभेऽर्जुनस्य।

दग्ध्वापि देहम् गिरिशेन रोषात् खण्डीकृता ज्येव मनोभवस्य ॥ १६-५१

āpiñjarā baddharajaḥkaṇatvāt mañjuryudārā śuśubhe'rjunasya |

dagdhvāpi deham giriśena roṣāt khaṇḍīkṛtā jyeva manobhavasya || 16-51

16-51. The long sprouts bearing the flowers of the Arjun tree (the Arjunolic Myrobalan tree; botanical name 'Terninalia arjuna'), coloured yellow because of them being covered by pollen, resembled the string of the bow of Kamdeo (the patron deity of passion and love; Cupid) that Lord Shiva held after he had burned the former to ashes for his mischief¹.

[Note--¹This story has been elaborately narrated in Tulsidas' epic narration of the time and life of Lord Ram in his book known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 82--to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87.

Briefly, the gods sent Kamdeo to provoke Lord Shiva, who was engaged in deep meditation, so that he marries Parvati and begets a warrior son who can vanquish the demons Tarakasur. Kamdeo began playing his tricks on Lord Shiva and successfully managed to disrupt the Lord's meditation. Lord Shiva became furious and opened his 'third eye' located in the centre of his forehead. This eye spewed fire which burned Kamdeo and reduced him to ashes while Lord Shiva snatched his bow and broke it into two, dislodging the string from its hook. Since Kamdeo used flowers as arrows to attack his victims and the creepers as the bow, so the long stalks of flowers came to be associated with the string of his bow.]

Verse no. 52:

**मनोजगन्धम् सहकारभङ्गम् पुराणशीधुम् नवपाटलम् च।
संबध्नता कामिजनेषु दोषाः सर्वे निदाघावधिना प्रमृष्टाः ॥ १६-५२**

manojñagandham sahakārabhaṅgam purāṇasīdhum navapāṭalam ca |
sambadhnatā kāmijaneṣu doṣāḥ sarve nidāghāvadhinā pramṛṣṭāḥ || 16-52

16-52. In the latter half of the summer season, the sweet smelling buds and sprouts of the mango fruit, sweet juice of the sugarcane that rivals the sweet smelling wine, and bouquets of young trumpet flowers compensated lovers for the absence of the pleasant days of spring.

[Note--At this juncture, the poet describes the latter part of the summer season when mangoes are just making their appearance, and juice of the sugarcane replaces wine to cool down parched throats. Lovers exchange bouquets of trumpet flowers that grow in abundance during this part of the year as they enjoy the sweet aroma of mango orchards and slowly sip sweet sugarcane juice just like one would sip wine slowly in the winters and the spring season when neither the mango nor the sugarcane is available.]

Verse no. 53:

**जनस्य तस्मिन्समये विगाढे बभूवतुद्वौ सविशेषकान्तौ।
तापापनोदक्षमपादसेवौ स चोदयस्थौ नृपतिः शशी च ॥ १६-५३**

janasya tasminsamaye vigāḍhe babhūvaturdvau saviśeṣakāntau |
tāpāpanodakṣamapādasevau sa codayasthau nrpatiḥ śaśī ca || 16-53

16-53. During those tormenting hot days of summer, there were only two entities that pleased the people: one was king Kush who provided relief to the poor and the have-nots

by his graceful and obliging nature of being kind to those who serve him, and the other was the moon whose cool rays acted as a balm to soothe the suffering of the hot scorching days of summer.

Verse no. 55:

अथोर्मिलोलोन्मदराजहंसे रोधोलतापुष्पवहे सरय्वाः।

विहर्तुमिच्छा वनितासखस्य तस्याम्भसि ग्रीष्मसुखे बभूव ॥ १६-५४

athormilolonmadarājahaṁse rodholatāpuṣpavahe sarayvāḥ |

vihartumicchā vanitāsakhasya tasyāmbhasi grīṣmasukhe babhūva || 16-54

16-54. Once king Kush wished to have some pastime and enjoy some kind of water sport in river Saryu, that was cool and very agreeable during the hot days of summer. So he went there accompanied by his trusted companions (courtiers, advisors, ministers, councillors) and court courtesans (**vanitāsakhasya**). On the surface of the water of this river were royal swans that floated majestically on its gentle waves, sending ripples by their movement. The environment surrounding the river was redolent with the sweet fragrance of flowers blossoming on the many creepers and trees on its banks, giving the atmosphere a rich experience that was very pleasant and appealing in nature.

[Note—(a) The word used in the text is **vanitāsakhasya**, which has two parts--viz. 'vanita or banita', and 'sakhasya'. 'Banita' means a pretty lady or a woman; it does not necessarily mean a person's wife. Since in early times, great monarchs used to have courtesans in their service, ladies who would entertain guests and courtiers of the royal court, and were part of the king's retinue of attendants and servants wherever he went, so when Kush decided to go out for an outing on the banks of river Saryu along with his ministers, councillors, advisors and other courtiers, it is quite normal that the courtesans in his payroll would also go along with the party like the king's other attendants and servants.

The other word 'Sakhasya' means a friend, in the company of friends, or along with friends to accompany him. So therefore, the combined word would mean: 'Kush went to river Saryu with his companions that included court courtesans as well as ministers, advisors and other courtiers.

In this context, refer to verse no. 71 and the note appended to it herein below.

But one thing is for sure--in the context of Kush, the word **vanita / banita** does not mean his wife or queen (as some people may interpret the word to mean) for the simple reason that till this point of time he had not married. As a proof we can cite the early part of this canto when the deity of Ayodhya went to meet him in the dead of night when he was lying alone on his bed, restless and unable to sleep. He had also warned the shadowy figure representing the deity that she must be alert and careful not to try any dirty tricks on him because descendants of the Raghu dynasty abhor seeing and interacting with unknown ladies and stranger woman folk. If he had a queen, she must have been in his bed chamber, but no such mention has been made of her. Even if it assumed that he had a wife with him, it is incongruous to believe that she remained oblivious of the interaction

between Kush and the deity. No mention is made that Kush told his wife about the deity or what she told him about Ayodhya, the capital of his ancestors.

Further, nowhere is there any mention or description of Kush's marriage till now, for had he married then it would not be a secret affair as he was a great king, and a king's wedding is a grand affair, not something to hush up.

Another point is that even if it is assumed that Kush had a queen, then it must be kept in mind that he belonged to a race which was very conscientious about their behaviour, being very careful not to break 'maryada', dignity, self-respect and modesty of the office of royalty, that requires that the queen does not go out in the open and play around a sport with her husband, the king, in full glare of public eye. Playing water sport in river Saryu could not be a private affair, as it was an open space visited by every citizen.

Kush followed in the footsteps of his father Lord Ram who had only one wife, Sita, Kush's mother. Soon we shall read in this very canto itself that he married the princess of the Naagas (legendary Serpent rulers of the subterranean world), whose name was Kumudwati, the sister of the Serpent king.

(b) The water of river Saryu was cool and crystal clean. It felt very comfortable and invigorating to take a dip in it during the hot days of summer. The beauty of the river was enhanced by the presence of swans that floated idly on its surface, giving the impression of the Mansarovar Lake, the legendary lake renowned for its crystal clear water where swans float in the higher reaches of the Himalayas, the northern chain of majestic mountains in India. Swan itself stands for purity and cleanliness, and hence this bird is used as a metaphor to imply that the river Saryu had crystal clean and placid waters.

On the banks of Saryu were gardens and parks in which a wide variety of flowers bloomed. Their sweet fragrance was carried over the surface of the water of the river by the soft breeze that blew over it. This fragrance spread in all the directions, covering all the areas around the river, both up and down stream, as well as the surrounding banks as the breeze wafted in and out, grazing the surface of the river and the land surrounding it.]

Verse no. 55:

स तीरभूमौ विहितोपकार्याम् आनायिभिस्तामपकृष्टनक्राम्।

विगाहितुम् श्रीमहिमानुरूपम् प्रचक्रमे चक्रधरप्रभावः ॥ १६-५५

sa tīrabhūmau vihitopakāryām ānāyibhistāmapakṛṣṭanakrām |

vigāhitum śrīmahimānurūpam pracakrame cakradharaprabhāvaḥ || 16-55

16-55. King Kush-- who was strong, powerful and valiant as Lord Vishnu (here meaning Lord Ram, Kush's father, who was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu)-- went to river Saryu with his team following him. Large tents were erected on the banks of the river to make seating arrangements for him and his companions, and divers as well as boatmen spread nets to fish out dangerous aquatic animals such as crocodiles and other large fish to ensure safety of the king.

Verse no. 56:

सा तीरसोपानपथावतारात् अन्योन्यकेयूरविघट्टिनीभिः।
सनूपुरक्षोभपदाभिरासीत् उद्विग्नहंसा सरिदङ्गनाभिः ॥ १६-५६

sā tīrasopānapathāvatārāt anyonyakeyūravighaṭṭinībhiḥ |
sanūpurakṣobhapadābhirāsīt udvignahaṁsā saridaṅganābhiḥ || 16-56

16-56. When the females in the company started entering the waters of river Saryu, their armlets rubbed against one another, and the small bells tied to their anklets began jingling, creating a charming orchestra, hearing the music of which even the swans became wonderstruck and began dancing in symphony with them.

[Note—¹Kalidas was a poet, and poets of that era usually used the female form, with all its variations and paraphernalia, as a medium to express their appreciation of the virtues of beauty, charm, passion, pleasure and enchantment, as well as to add an element of glamour and ornamentation in their compositions. Hence, Kalidas had frequently employed this tool to beautify his writing, and add a dash of charm and glamour to his description of Nature with its inherently charming environment in all its aspects. In the present case, Kalidas wishes to stress that the sound emanating from the jingling and tinkling of the armlets and anklets worn by pretty young females as they descended the flight of steps on the banks that led to the water of the river gave the impression of a variety of musical instruments playing together. The combined effect of the sight of beautiful ladies and the sound of their anklets and armlets was very enchanting for the senses, and it pleased all those who happened to be present on the occasion.

As these ladies entered the water, large numbers of ripples were formed on its surface. When they splashed around and threw palms-full of water on each other, the water was further stirred. The swans floating on the surface of the water also began to move up and down, or oscillate, along with the ripples and the waves, giving the impression that they were dancing and thoroughly enjoying the musical sound of the jingling and tingling emanating from the armlets and anklets of the bathing ladies.

When excited, swans make a variety of sounds, variously called honking, trumpeting, whooping, snorting, hissing, grunting or cackling. The mix of these sounds represented a symphony orchestra where different types of musical instruments are played together in a synchronised manner.]

Verse no. 57:

परस्पराभ्युक्षणतत्पराणाम् तासाम् नृपो मज्जनरागदर्शी।
नौसंश्रयः पार्श्वगताम् किरातीमुपात्ताबालव्यजनाम् बभाषे ॥ १६-५७

parasparābhyukṣaṇatatparāṇām tāsām nrpo majjanarāgadarśī |
nausamśrayaḥ pārsvagaṭām kirātimupāttābālavayajanām babhāṣe || 16-57

16-57. Observing the ladies splashing and throwing water on each other, king Kush, who was riding a boat and enjoying the sight, said to the tribal women, who were standing near him to wave hand-held fans and whisks at him, as follows--

Verse no. 58:

पश्यावरोधैः शतशो मदीयैः विगाह्यमानो गलिताङ्गरागैः।

संध्योदयः साभ्र इवेष वर्णम् पुष्यत्यनेकम् सरयूप्रवाहः ॥ १६-५८

paśyāvarodhaiḥ śataśo madiyaiḥ vigāhyamāno galitāṅgarāgaiḥ |
saṁdhyodayaḥ sābhra iveṣa varṇam puṣyatyanekam sarayūpravāhaḥ ||
16-58

16-58. Kush said to the tribal women: "Look, when so many fair ladies are bathing together in the river and enjoying themselves, the colourful cosmetics (ointments and creams) which they had applied on their bodies gets dissolved in the water of the river, giving the water flowing in the river different hues of colour, making it look as if clouds of different shades of colour are being reflected in the water during evening hours.

[Note--In the evening when the sun is setting, the clouds assume different shades of colour, and these colours are reflected from the surface of the water of the river because the clouds form a canopy over it in the sky.]

Verse no. 59:

विलुप्तमन्तःपुरसुन्दरीणाम् यदञ्जनम् नौलुलिताभिरद्भिः।

तद्बध्नतीभिर्मदरागशोभाम् विलोचनेषु प्रतिमुक्तमासाम् ॥ १६-५९

viluptamantaḥpurasundarīṇām yadañjanam naululitābhiradbhiḥ |
tadbadhnatībhiradarāgaśobhām vilocaneṣu pratimuktamāsām || 16-59

16-59. The waves created by the movement of the boats splashed against the faces of the ladies bathing in the river, washing away the black pigment that they had applied as a cosmetic on their eyelids and eye-lashes (as part of their regular facial make-up), and this exposed the redness of their eyes, which in turn revealed that they had drunk wine before coming to bathe in the river.

[Note--In olden times, women associated with high society usually drank wine in moderation, which caused a red tint in their eyes. Perhaps they did this to overcome their natural instinct of feeling shy in the company of male companions in a royal court, or during outings such as the present occasion of playing water-sport in the river.

It ought to be borne in mind that while the outline of the story of Raghuvansham is true and faithful to the actual history of the Raghu dynasty, but its finer details are filled in a colourful manner with a flourish of this pen by the poet Kalidas himself, and

here he has used his discretion about what to tell, and how colourfully to tell it. Being a poet renowned for his narrative style that delves deep into the fields of erotica and exotica, he uses his skill to the hilt and gives the reader a vivid picture of the different aspects of the high society of those ancient times, with little restrictions and inhibitions while describing details of the feminine form that may seem immodest or indecent to some people.

But it must not be forgotten that Kalidas was not writing a holy scripture but a classical poetry, and he chose the subject of the dynasty of king Raghu as it gave him an opportunity to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram in the process, which of course he has done with a flourish in Canto nos. 10-15 of this book Raghuvansham. And classical poetry has a different plane on which it stands as compared to a holy scripture.

Even today, from what still survives in physical terms, we find that there are many temples of ancient times whose walls depict explicit scenes of sex which, strictly speaking, should not be carved in the wall of a religious shrine, as the shrine is not intended to arouse sensual passions but overcome it in order to divert the mind to the divine, away from worldly lust and sensual pleasures.]

Verse no. 60:

एता गुरुश्रोणिपयोधरत्वात् आत्मानमुद्वोढुमशक्नुवत्यः।

गाढाङ्गदैर्बाहुभिरप्सु बालाः क्लेशोत्तरम् रागवशात्प्लवन्ते ॥ १६-६०

etā guruśroṇipayodharatvāt ātmānamudvoḍhumaśaknuvatyaḥ |
gāḍhāṅgadairbāhubhirapsu bālāḥ kleśottaram rāgavaśātplavante || 16-60

16-60. These ladies had heavy hips and fully mature bosoms, and along with the heavy armlets and anklets they wore it became difficult for them to remain afloat on the surface of the water while playing water-sport in the river.

[Note—¹These women had voluptuous forms with well-formed hips that had wide girths, and large bosoms that heaved up and down when they breathed and moved their arms in order to swim. The poet says that because of the weight of their curvaceous breasts and hips, these women found it difficult to keep themselves afloat on water. But since they insisted on playing sport in the water, and in order to keep themselves afloat, they used their arms like an oar of a boat to somehow manage to avoid sinking. They were heavily ornamented, wearing large and heavy armlets and wristbands, which made this task—of using their arms as oars to keep afloat and swim—a difficult and strenuous activity for them. Besides this, with each stroke of their arms and heaviness of breathing that was natural with the labour needed to swim, their large and heavy breasts would heave up and down in the water.]

Verse no. 61:

अमी शिरीषप्रसवावतंसाः प्रभ्रंशिनो वारिविहारिणीनाम्।

पारिप्लवाः स्रोतसि निम्नगायाः शैवाललोलांश्छलयन्ति मीनान् ॥ १६-६१

amī śirīṣaprasavāvataṁsāḥ prabhraṁśino vārivihāriṇīnām |
pāriplavāḥ srotasi nimnagāyāḥ śaivālalolāṁśchalayanti mīnān || 16-61

16-61. While these ladies played and swam around in the river, the Sirsa flower (of the Albizia lebbeck tree, also called the woman's tongue tree) that young women use to adorn their ears¹, slip from their ears and fall into the water, forming a carpet on the surface of the water. The fish think that they are moss, and in order to grab it they jump up and lunge at these flowers.

[Note--¹Refer also to verse no. 48 herein above.]

Verse no. 62:

आसाम् जलास्फालनतत्पराणाम् मुक्ताफलस्पर्धिषु शीकरेषु।

पयोधरोत्सर्पिषु शीर्यमाणः संलक्ष्यते न च्छिदुरोऽपि हारः ॥ १६-६२

āsām jalāsphālanatatparāṇām muktāphalasparḍhiṣu śīkareṣu |
payodharotsarpiṣu śīryamaṇaḥ saṁlakṣyate na cchiduro'pi hāraḥ || 16-62

16-62. Kush expresses his astonishment at the behaviour of these women. He tells the tribal attendants who are waving fans at him (verse no. 57): "Look, these fair ladies are so engrossed in enjoying water-sport that they are not even aware that their pearl necklaces have broken and pearls got scattered on the water (before sinking)¹. They are so absorbed in their pastime that they think that the bubbles of water forming around them are their pearl necklaces that float around their bodies.

[Note--¹The pure pearl is heavier than water, so when the necklaces got dislodged from the bodies of these ladies, these ornaments sank in the water of river Saryu. But the women were so much engrossed in playing that they had no inkling that their pearl necklaces are lost, thinking that the bubbles of water forming around them were pearl necklaces floating on the water because they were tied to their necks.]

Verse no. 63:

आवर्तशोभा नतनाभिकान्तेर्भङ्गो भ्रुवाम् द्वन्द्वचराः स्तनानाम्।

जातानि रूपावयवोपमानानि अदूर्वतीनि विलासिनीनाम् ॥ १६-६३

āvartaśobhā natanābhikānterbhāṅgo bhruvām dvandvacarāḥ stanānām |
jātāni rūpāvayavopamānāni adūravartīni vilāsinīnām || 16-63

16-63. Those things which are metaphorically used to describe the beauty of a female form have all collected here. For instance, the deep whirlpools formed in the water are like the navels of these young women; the waves are like their eyebrows; and the loving birds called Chakwa and Chakwi (the male and female ruddy goose) represent their fully grown bosoms.

[Note--These two birds are regarded by poets as eternal lovers. Hence, in this erotic verse, these birds, as well as the whirlpool and the waves on the water are used as metaphors or tools to impress about the beauty of the feminine form.]

Verse no. 64:

तीरस्थलीबर्हिभिरुत्कलापैः प्रस्निग्धकेकैरभिनन्द्यमानम्।

श्रोत्रेषु संमूर्च्छति रक्तमासाम् गीतानुगम् वारिमृदङ्गवाद्यम् ॥ १६-६४

tīrasthalībarhibhirutkalāpaiḥ prasnigdhakekairabhinandyaṁānam |

śrotreṣu saṁmūrccati raktamāsām gītānugam vārimṛdaṅgavādyam || 16-64

16-64. {King Kush continued:--} "These fair ladies are singing and splashing rhythmically on the water with their hands as if they were playing the musical instrument called the 'mridang' (vārimṛdaṅgavādyam). The peacocks, who are observing them from the banks of the river, join them by opening their colourful plumes and beginning to sing and dance along in harmony with the movement of these fair ladies as if these birds are hailing and applauding these ladies.

The combined effect, of the singing of these ladies and the sweet sound made by peacocks as they dance around, is very pleasing to the ear and the mind.

Verse no. 65:

संदष्टवस्त्रेष्वबलानितम्बेषु इन्दुप्रकाशान्तरितोदुतुल्याः।

अमी जलापूरितसूत्रमार्गा मौनम् भजन्ते रशनाकलापाः ॥ १६-६५

saṁdaṣṭavastreṣvabalānitambeṣu induprakāśāntaritoḍutulyāḥ |

amī jalāpūritasūtramārgā maunam bhajante raśanākalāpāḥ || 16-65

16-65. The ladies had wrapped their bosoms with white transparent clothes to protect their modesty, while the little bells of the waist-bands around their hips are still visible. But because the strings of the waist-bands and the thread that ties the bells to the girdle itself have become wet and taught, the little bells do not jingle as they should do when these ladies move around. This scene reminds one of the veil of white moonlight that covers the sky through which stars could be seen, but they do not twinkle as they should have done had the sky been dark and without the moonlight.

[Note--During moonlit nights, some of the brighter stars are visible, but they do not appear to twinkle. On the contrary, when the night sky is completely dark, one can easily see countless small stars that twinkle. Similarly, in this case, the white piece of cloth which these ladies have used to cover themselves fails to conceal the waist-band around their hips, and the bells attached to these girdles do not chime in the usual way because the threads attaching them to the girdle has become taught due to water wetting them.]

Verse no. 66:

एताः करोत्पीडितवारिधारा दर्पात्सखीभिर्वदनेषु सिक्ताः।

वक्रेतराग्रैरलकैस्तरुण्यः चूर्णारुणान्वारिलवान्वमन्ति ॥ १६-६६

etāḥ karotpīḍitavāridhārā darpātsakhībhirvadaneṣu siktāḥ |
vakretarāgrairalakaistarūṇyaḥ cūrṇāruṇānvārilavānvamanti || 16-66

16-66. When friends of these fair ladies sprinkle water on their faces, and they reciprocate by sprinkling water on the former, the kumkum powder¹ which these ladies had applied on their long hairs gets dissolved in the water and drip down, causing the water around them turn red.

[Note--¹The 'Kumkum' powder is a red powder primarily made from dry turmeric and an alkali such as slaked lime (calcium hydroxide) or lemon juice. Water is used to mix them, and then the paste is left to dry. When mixed together, the yellow turmeric is turned red in colour. In some mixtures, a little bit of lead oxide is also added to enhance the red colour into its vibrant form. In some variations, sandalwood or plant extracts are added to enhance the colour and lend a fragrance to the mixture.

The Kumkum is applied by women in India on their heads as an auspicious powder that brings happiness and well-being to the family.]

Verse no. 67:

उद्बन्धकेशच्युतपत्रलेखो विश्लेषिमुक्ताफलपत्रवेष्टः।

मनोज्ञ एव प्रमदामुखानाम् अम्भोविहाराकुलितोऽपि वेषः ॥ १६-६७

udbandhakeśacyutapatralekho viśleṣimuktāphalapatraveṣṭaḥ |
manojña eva pramadāmukhānām ambhovihārākulito'pi veṣaḥ || 16-67

16-67. King Kush concludes by saying: "Though the buns on their heads have become untied and the long strands of hairs fall randomly on their faces and bosoms, the cosmetics on their faces and bosoms too have been washed off in the water, and the ear-buds made of pearl have also fallen off, making them look odd, unkempt and dishevelled, yet the natural charm of their faces is still there."

Verse no. 68:

स नौविमानादवतीर्य रेमे विलोलहारः सह ताभिरप्सु।
स्कन्धावलग्नोद्धृतपद्मिनीकः करेणुभिर्वन्य इव दिवपेन्द्रः ॥ १६-६८

sa nauvimānādavatīrya reme vilolahārah saha tābhirapsu |
skandhāvalagnoddhṛtapadminīkaḥ kareṇubhirvanya iva dvipendraḥ || 16-68

16-68. By-and-by, king Kush too wanted to play water sport and swim in the cool waters of river Saryu. So, with the royal necklace swaying on his chest, he took a plunge into the river from his boat as if diving into the water from a low-flying airplane. Once in the water, he joined the ladies in playing water-sport with them and got surrounded by them, just like the case of a male elephant entering a water-body having a lot many lotus flowers, and then plucking the flowers with their stalks the elephant would toss them on its back while playing around in the water.

[Note--In these verses, from no. 56 onwards till no. 71, poet Kalidas has painted a vivid picture of a king playing water-sport with his courtesans in a river. This narrative is very explicit in its description of erotic scenes, but we must keep in mind that Kalidas was famed for this kind of narrative.]

Verse no. 69:

ततो नृपेणानुगताः स्त्रियस्ता भ्राजिष्णुना सातिशयम् विरेजुः।
प्रागेव मुक्ता नयनाभिरामाः प्राप्येन्द्रनीलम् किमुतोन्मयूखम् ॥ १६-६९

tato nṛpeṇānugatāḥ striyastā bhrājiṣṇunā sātiśayam virejuḥ |
prāgeva muktā nayanābhirāmāḥ prāpyendranīlam kimutonmayūkham ||
16-69

16-69. While playing water-sport, the women had already looked wonderfully charming, but with the beaming Kush joining them with all his energy and radiance forming a subtle halo around him, the sight was all the more enduringly captivating. It is like the case of a necklace of pearl which looks beautiful in its own right, but if a brilliant blue sapphire is added to this necklace, there is no doubt that its beauty, charm and magnificence is enhanced manifold times and gets a boost.

[Note--Here, the charming ladies that form a ring around Kush are likened to a necklace of pearls, while Kush himself to the sparkling blue sapphire that adds further beauty and overall magnificence to the necklace. The sapphire forms the main or a center piece in a necklace of pearls. It is also called a pendant because of its unique position in the necklace that resembles a chain of pearls. So therefore, since king Kush was the central figure in the group of ladies bathing in the river, he is likened to a pendant of sapphire in a chain made from a string of pearls.]

Verse no. 70:

वर्णोदकैः काञ्चनशृङ्गमुक्तैः तमायताक्ष्यः प्रणयादसिञ्चन्।
तथागतः सोऽतितराम् बभासे सधातुनिष्यन्द इवाद्रिराजः ॥ १६-७०

varṇodakaiḥ kāñcanaśṛṅgamuktaiḥ tamāyatākṣyaḥ praṇayādasiñcan |
tathāgataḥ so'titarām babhāse sadhātuniṣyanda ivādrirājaḥ || 16-70

16-70. The wide-eyed beauties who had surrounded Kush, sprayed coloured water, made by mixing it with kumkum (a mixture of turmeric, lemon juice and sandalwood), on him, with golden syringes as part of the water-sport. At that time, drenched in the scented and coloured water sprayed on him by the damsels, Kush looked magnificent and charming as if water, coloured by the mountain dust consisting of minerals, was cascading down water-falls from the higher reaches of the Himalayas.

[Note--Water from many mountain streamlets and rivulets collect and cascade or tumble down high vertical mountain ledges and cliffs as water-falls. The water is constantly replenished by rain or melting snow. In this verse, the coloured water sprayed on Kush by the ladies cascaded or flowed down his body continuously like a water-fall as more and more of water was sprayed on him by these playful ladies.]

Verse no. 71:

तेनावरोधप्रमदासखेन विगाहमानेन सरिद्वराम् ताम्।
आकाशगङ्गारतिरप्सरोभिर्वृतो मरुत्वाननुयातलीलः ॥ १६-७१

tenāvarodhapramadāsakhena vigāhamānena saridvarām tām |
ākāśagaṅgāratirapsarobhirvṛto marutvānanuyātalīlaḥ || 16-71

16-71. While playing water-sport with court courtesans in river Saryu, king Kush looked like Indra, the king of heaven, when he plays with celestial damsels known as Apsaras in the heavenly river called 'Akash Ganga'.

[Note--This comparison is very significant, because like the Apsaras of heaven are not Indra's wives but merely courtesans of the court of heaven where Indra is the ruler, so likewise the ladies with whom Kush was enjoying water-sport were not his wives, but court courtesans. In this context, refer to verse no. 54 of this canto and its accompanying note.]

Verse no. 72:

यत्कुम्भयोनेरधिगम्य रामः कुशाय राज्येन समम् दिदेश।
तदस्य जैत्राभरणम् विहर्तुः अज्यातपातम् सलिले ममज्ज ॥ १६-७२

yatkumbhayoneradhigamya rāmaḥ kuśāya rājyena samam dideśa |
tadasya jaitrābharaṇam vihartuḥ ajñyātapātam salile mamajja || 16-72

16-72. Lord Ram had given his son Kush a priceless gem studded to a bracelet that ensured victory to its wearer. This ornament that granted victory and invincibility was given to Lord Ram by sage Agastya, and the Lord transferred its ownership to Kush at the time of his coronation (on the throne of his new kingdom with its capital at Kushawati).

Unfortunately, in the chaos of playing water-sport, this ornament fell off and got lost in the water of river Saryu, but at that time no one had an inkling of this happening.

Verse no. 73:

स्नात्वा यथाकाममसौ सदारस्तीरोपकार्याम् गतमात्र एव।
दिव्येन शून्यम् वलयेन बाहुमपोढ नेपथ्यविधिर्ददर्श ॥ १६-७३

snātvā yathākāmamasau sadārastīropakāryām gatamātra eva |
divyena śūnyam valayena bāhumapoḍha nepathyavidhirdadarśa || 16-73

16-73. After the water-sport was over and king Kush and the ladies went to their respective tents on the banks of the river to change clothes, then at that time Kush suddenly realised to his consternation that he was no more wearing that bracelet.

Verse no. 74:

जयश्रियः संवननम् यतस्तत् आमुक्तपूर्वम् गुरुणा च यस्मात्।
सेहेऽस्य न भ्रंशमतो न लोभात्स तुल्यपुष्पाभरणो हि धीरः ॥ १६-७४

jayaśriyaḥ saṁvananam yatastat āmuktapūrvam guruṇā ca yasmāt |
sehe'sya na bhraṁśamato na lobhātsa tulyapušpābharaṇo hi dhīraḥ || 16-74

16-74. King Kush treated an ornament made of flowers and one made of priceless gems equally, and he was not so much disturbed at losing a piece of ornament (which he could have replaced with a new and better one), but became extremely frustrated and restless at the loss of this particular bracelet for two primary reasons--(i) one, it had a special mystical powers that could bring his enemies to submit or surrender themselves before him, and (ii) two, it was worn by his father Lord Ram, and was gifted to him at the time of his coronation, making it a priceless piece of heirloom, a memorable gift from his loving father that was irreplaceable, and losing of which was like a curse and an evil omen for him.

[Note—¹This bracelet had immense emotional value for Kush as it was worn earlier by his father Lord Ram, and hence it was a prized piece of heirloom to be preserved and cherished by generations to come. Losing it was like losing a part of one's own being,

one's own identity, one's own lineage, and one's own heritage. Kush therefore was devastated and felt utterly despondent when he lost this bracelet not because it was precious in monetary terms, or merely because it was a talisman that would grant him victory over his adversaries, but more because it was worn by his beloved father Lord Ram, making it a priceless piece of memory that could not be replaced by any other means whatsoever.]

Verse no. 75:

ततः समाज्ञापयदाशु सर्वानानायिनस्तद्विचये नदीष्णान्।
वन्ध्यश्रमास्ते सरयूम् विगाहय तमूचुरम्लानमुखप्रसादाः ॥ १६-७५

tataḥ samājñāpayadāśu sarvānānāyinastadvicaye nadīṣṇān |
vandhyaśramāste sarayūm vigāhaya tamūcuramlānamukhaprasādāḥ || 16-75

16-75. Kush ordered boatmen who were experts in diving into the water, to go into river Saryu and search for the bracelet. They did their best to scour every corner of the river, but all their efforts were in vain as they could not trace the bracelet. Finally, they came to report to Kush about the development; their faces remained calm and poised inspite of the failure in finding the bracelet (because they knew Kush's nature of not getting angry if his orders are carried out faithfully but the result is negative).

Verse no. 76:

कृतः प्रयत्नो न च देव लब्धम् मग्नम् पयस्याभरणोत्तमम् ते।
नागेन लौल्यात्कुमुदेन नूनम् उपात्तमन्तर्हदवासिना तत् ॥ १६-७६

kṛtaḥ prayatno na ca deva labdham magnam payasyābharaṇottamam te |
nāgena laulyātkumudena nūnam upāttamantarhradavāsinā tat || 16-76

16-76. The divers and boatmen calmly reported the development to Kush, telling him: "Oh Lord! In spite of our best efforts and repeated trying, we are sorry to say we could not find your treasured ornament in the river. It appears to us that probably the ornament has been stolen by a Naaga king (the king of the subterranean world of serpents) called Kumud who lives in the depths of the river."

Verse no. 77:

ततः स कृत्वा धनुराततज्यम् धनुर्धरः कोपविलोहिताक्षः।
गारुत्मतम् तीरगतस्तरस्वी भुजंगनाशाय समाददेऽस्त्रम् ॥ १६-७७

tataḥ sa kṛtvā dhanurātatajyam dhanurdharaḥ kopavilohitākṣaḥ |
gārutmatam tīragatastarasvī bhujaṁganāśāya samādade'stram || 16-77

16-77. No sooner had Kush heard what the divers and the boatmen said, than he became furious. With eyes turned red in anger, he decided to punish the serpent king. So he immediately stood up on the bank of the river, readied his bow, and mounted an arrow known as the 'Garud-astra' that had the ability to exterminate the entire serpent race.

[Note--This specialised arrow is named after Garud, the celestial eagle and mount of Lord Vishnu, renowned for his animosity with serpents.

In Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, we read that when Lord Ram was trapped by Meghanad, the son of the demon king Ravana of Lanka, in a snare of serpents, at that time Narad, the celestial sage, had sent Garud who came immediately and gobbled up all the serpents, thereby freeing Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 73--to Doha no. 74 a.}

Another parallel with the story of the Ramayana is this: When the ocean refused to give a passage to Lord Ram so that his army of monkeys and bears could cross over to Lanka to free Sita from the captivity of Ravana, inspite of the Lord politely pleading with the deity of the ocean for three days to give him a passage to the other side, the Lord became furious. He asked Laxman, his brother, to give him his special arrow so that he would dry up the ocean and punish its deity for being stubborn and unrelenting. But as soon as the Lord was readying his arrow to shoot at the ocean, the deity got terrified; there was a mighty turmoil in the water as all marine animals feared extinction. Then the deity of the ocean came to Lord Ram with gifts, asked for forgiveness, and promised that he would help his army to build a bridge and go across it to Lanka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 57--to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60.}]

Verse no. 78:

तस्मिन्हृदः संहितमात्र एव क्षोभात्समाविद्धतरंगहस्तः।

रोधांसि निघ्नन्नवपातमग्नः करीव वन्यः परुषम् ररास ॥ १६-७८

tasminhradaḥ saṁhitamātra eva kṣobhātsamāviddhatarāṅgahastah |
rodhāṁsi nighnannavapātamagnaḥ karīva vanyaḥ paruṣam rarāsa || 16-78

16-78. No sooner had Kush got ready to shoot his formidable arrow, than there was a great turmoil in the water of the river. The water churned and heaved, and there was so much noise coming from the water that it appeared as if some invisible deity was putting up its arms to pray to Kush to forgive the impertinence it has shown, and that it was praying for mercy and ready for a compromise. It was like the scene when some elephant had fallen in a large trench filled with water, and being unable to come out of it, the animal becomes so worked-up that it starts trumpeting loudly in the hope that someone would pull him out.

Verse no. 79:

तस्मात्समुद्रादिव मथ्यमानात् उद्वृत्तनक्रात्सहसोन्ममज्ज।

लक्ष्म्येव सार्धम् सुरराजवृक्षः कन्याम् पुरस्कृत्य भुजंगराजः ॥ १६-७९

tasmātsamudrādiva mathyamānāt udvṛttanakrātsahasonmamajja |
lakṣmyeva sārddham surarājavarṣaḥ kanyām puraskṛtya bhujaṅgarājah ||
16-79

16-79. All the aquatic animals such as crocodiles and other large fish were very agitated. But suddenly, amidst all the turmoil and churning, the king of serpents, Kumud, emerged from the depth of the water with a young pretty damsel with him. It was like the case of the Kalpa Tree appearing with goddess Laxmi on the surface of the celestial ocean at the time of its churning by the gods and the demons.

[Note--Amongst the many things produced at the time of this legendary churning of the celestial ocean, Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was one. In the present case, the king of the serpent kingdom came to meet Kush with his sister named Kumudwati. The following verses throw light on what happened next.]

Verse no. 80:

विभूषणप्रत्युपहारहस्तम् उपस्थितम् वीक्ष्य विशांपतिस्तम्।

सौपर्णमस्त्रम् प्रतिसंजहार प्रहवेष्वनिर्बन्धरुषो हि सन्तः ॥ १६-८०

vibhūṣaṇapratyupahārahastam upasthitam vīkṣya viśāmpatistam |
sauparṇamastram pratisamjahāra prahveṣvanirbandharuṣo hi santaḥ || 16-80

16-80. When king Kush saw that the king of the Naagas has come to meet him politely, bearing Kush's cherished bracelet in order to return it to him, he (Kush) eased the strings of his bow and removed the arrow from it, because noble people do not show anger at someone who has come to meet the former politely with a bowed head.

[Note--As soon as Kush saw the king of Naagas coming to him with his bracelet in his hand, he immediately cooled down and decided to be practical. His main concern was retrieving the lost bracelet, and since the polite demeanours of the Naaga king clearly meant he had no intention for a confrontation, Kush decided to welcome him.]

Verse no. 81:

त्रैलोक्यनाथप्रभवम् प्रभावात् कुशम् दिवषामङ्कुशमस्त्रविद्वान्।

मानोन्नतेनाप्यभिवन्द्य मूर्ध्ना मूर्धाभिषिक्तम् कुमुदो बभाषे ॥ १६-८१

trailokyanāthaprabhavam prabhāvāt kuśam dviṣāmaṅkuśamastravidvān |
mānonnatenāpyabhivandya mūrdhnā mūrdhābhiṣiktam kumudo babhāṣe || 16-81

16-81. Kumud, the king of the Naagas, who would usually hold his head high as he was proud of himself, had now bowed his head when he came to meet Kush, who was not only famed as being the son of Lord Ram, the Lord of all the three divisions of this creation (trailokyanāthaprabhavam), but who was also famed as the one who kept his enemies under tight leash like a goad keeps an elephant tamed (prabhāvāt kuśam).

The politeness and submissive demeanours of Kumud was also because he was well aware of the powers and abilities of Kush's arrow, that it could annihilate the entire aquatic world and the kingdom of serpents if Kush ordered his arrow to do so.

[Note-- Three reasons are given here as to why the serpent king Kumud was polite with Kush. One, because Kush was the son of Lord Ram, the Lord of the world. Two, because Kush had the ability to vanquish his enemies and keep them under tight leash. And three, because his arrow, known as the Garud-astra, had the ability to annihilate the entire serpent race, and since Kumud and his immediate companions lived in the water of river Saryu, along with him all other aquatic animals too would be annihilated.]

Verse no. 82:

अवैमि कार्यान्तरमानुषस्य विष्णोः सुताख्यामपराम् तनुम् त्वाम्।
सोऽहम् कथम् नाम तवाचरेयम् आराधनीयस्य धृतेर्विघातम् ॥ १६-८२

avaimi kāryāntaramānuṣasya viṣṇoḥ sutākhyāmaparām tanum tvām |
so'ham katham nāma tavācareyam āradhaniyasya dhṛtervighātam || 16-82

16-82. Kumud said to Kush: "Oh Lord! I know that you are the son of Lord Vishnu's human manifestation (i.e. Lord Ram) who came to the mortal world with an express objective to eliminate the scourge of the cruel demons. So obviously you deserve my respect. Say then, how can I ever even imagine to insult you or become inimical to you? How can I ever act against you or your interests that will make you unhappy?

Verse no. 83:

कराभिघातोत्थितकन्दुकेयम् आलोक्य बालातिकुतूहलेन।
हृदात्पतज्ज्योतिरिवान्तरिक्षात् आदत्त जैत्राभरणम् त्वदीयम् ॥ १६-८३

Karābhighātotthitakandukeyam ālokya bālātikutūhalena |
hradātpatajjyotirivāntarikṣāt ādatta jaitrābharaṇam tvadīyam || 16-83

16-83. This innocent young maiden of mine was playing ball with her hands. When she threw the ball high up in the sky and looked at it coming down, at that moment she saw a

star-like shining object falling down alongside the ball. So in childish enthusiasm, she immediately grabbed it out of curiosity as it seemed a strange object to her.

Verse no. 84:

तदेतदाजानुविलम्बिना ते ज्याघातरेखाकिणलाञ्छनेन।
भुजेन रक्षापरिघेण भूमेरुपैतु योगम् पुनरंसलेन ॥ १६-८४

tadetadājānuvilambinā te jyāghātarekhākīṇalāñchanena |
bhujena rakṣāparighena bhūmer upaitu yogam punaraṁsalena || 16-84

16-84. So kindly take your bracelet back from me and tie it once again on your long arm that extends to your knee, and on which dents have developed because of the pulling of the bow's string, which in turn protects the earth and its creatures.

[Note--Kumud has used his diplomatic skills here to remind Kush that since he is the protector of earth and its creatures like his father Lord Ram, he must also grant protection to the serpent race. Hence, Kumud cleverly ensures that Kush would not harm him now.]

Verse no. 85:

इमाम् स्वसारम् च यवीयसीम् मे कुमुद्वतीम् नार्हसि नानुमन्तुम्।
आत्मापराधम् नुदतीम् चिराय शुश्रूषया पार्थिव पादयोस्ते ॥ १६-८५

imām svasāram ca yavīyasīm me kumudvatīm nārhasi nānumantum |
ātmāparādhām nudatīm cirāya śuśrūṣayā pāṛthiva pādayoste || 16-85

16-85. This fair maiden with me is my younger sister named Kumudwati. She is desirous of serving you for the rest of her life and atone for her fault of taking your precious ornament without being aware of the gravity of her misdemeanour. So therefore, please be gracious to accept her as your wife."

Verse no. 86:

इत्यूचिवानुपहृताभरणः क्षितीशम् श्लाघ्यो भवान्स्वजन इत्यनुभाषितारम्।
संयोजयाम् विधिवदास समेतबन्धुः कन्यामयेन कुमुदः कुलभूषणेन ॥ १६-८६

ityūcivānupahr̥tābharaṇaḥ kṣitīśam
ślāghyoo bhavānsvajana ityanubhāṣitāram |
saṁyojayām vidhivadāsa sametabandhuḥ
kanyāmayena kumudaḥ kulabhūṣaṇena || 16-86

16-86. With this request, Kumud gave back the bracelet to Kush. Kush, on his part, replied that from that moment, he (Kumud) has become his respected relative. With this bond in place, Kumud summoned all his kin and formalised the marriage of his sister Kumudwati with Kush with great ceremony and fanfare.

Verse no. 87:

तस्याः स्पृष्टे मनुजपतिना साहचर्याय हस्ते
माङ्गल्योर्णावलयिनि पुरः पावकस्योच्छिखस्य।
दिव्यस्तूर्यध्वनिरुदचरद्व्यश्नुवानो दिगन्ता -
न्गन्धोदग्रम् तदनु ववृषुः पुष्पमाश्चर्यमेघाः ॥ १६-८७

tasyāḥ spr̥ṣṭe manujapatinā sāhacaryāya haste
māṅgalyorṇāvalayini purāḥ pāvakasyocchikhasya |
divyastūryadhvanirudacaradvyaśnuvāno digantā -
ngandhodagram tadanu vavr̥ṣuḥ puṣpamāścaryameghāḥ || 16-87

16-87. At the time when king Kush held the hand of Kumudwati, on which she wore an auspicious bracelet, during the formalisation of the matrimonial alliance between the two with a burning fire as a witness, then all the directions reverberated with the sound of simultaneous playing of many types of musical instruments, such as trumpets, horns, bugles and clarions, to celebrate this marriage ceremony, while the deity of the clouds (i.e. Indra) was so exhilarated that fragrant flowers were showered from the clouds to celebrate the occasion.

[Note--Clouds normally shower rain, but their deity is Indra, the king of heaven. So, when Kush and Kumudwati married each other, Indra rejoiced, and standing behind the clouds he showered heavenly flowers on the couple as well as on all others who were present on the occasion to witness the happy and auspicious marriage ceremony. For people on the ground, it appeared that the clouds are showering flowers.]

Verse no. 88:

इत्थम् नागस्त्रिभुवनगुरोरौरसम् मैथिलेयम्
लब्ध्वा बन्धुम् तमपि च कुशः पञ्चमम् तक्षकस्य।
एकः शङ्काम् पितृवधरिपोरत्यजद्वैनतेयात्
शान्तव्यालामवनिमपरः पौरकान्तः शशास ॥ १६-८८

ittham nāgastribhuvanaguroraurasam maithileyam
labdhvā bandhum tamapi ca kuśaḥ pañcamam takṣakasya |
ekaḥ śaṅkāṁ pitṛvadariporatyajadvainateyāt
śāntavyālāmavanimaparaḥ paurakāntaḥ śasāsa || 16-88

16-88. In this way, by marrying his sister Kumudwati to Kush, who was a son of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and his consort Sita, a daughter of the king of Mithila (i.e. king Janak), king Kumud of the serpent race became free from fear of Garud, the celestial eagle who was an eternal enemy of the serpents, because now he had established a formal relationship with the heir of Lord Ram whose primary form Lord Vishnu uses Garud as his mount, and obviously Garud would not harm someone who has become a relation of his own Lord, i.e. Lord Vishnu, albeit in a human form of the Lord as king Ram, the monarch of Ayodhya and the father of Kush.

So therefore, from that day, as far as Kumud and the rest of the serpent race was concerned, Garud was not someone to be afraid of, but merely a mount of Lord Ram's primary form as Lord Vishnu.

Simultaneously, by marrying Kumudwati, the sister of king Kumud who was the fifth son of the legendary king of serpents called 'Takshak'¹ (pañcamam takṣakasya), king Kush ensured that he and his subjects of Ayodhya were now freed from the fear of snake-bites. This alliance made everyone happy and contented, for it served to allay fear of both the races--of the serpents from Garud, and of the subjects of Ayodhya from snakes.

In this way, king Kush became dear to his subjects, and he began ruling his kingdom cheerfully, judiciously and with wisdom.

[Note--¹The 'Takshak' serpent was a powerful king of serpents and was the one who killed Parikshit in the story of the Mahabharat. He is regarded as one of the eight great dragon kings in Hindu mythology. He formally lived in the Khandava forest. When Krishna and the Pandava princes burned down this forest to build their capital, Takshak was away, but his wife perished in the raging fire. This incident caused a life-long animosity and rivalry between the Takshak and the Pandavas. To avenge the killing of his wife, Takshak used a sage's curse as an excuse to fatally bite Parikshit, the grandson of Arjun, that reduced Parikshit's body to ashes.

Enraged by his father's death by being bitten by Takshak, Parikshit's son named Janmanjaya performed a massive fire sacrifice in order to annihilate all the serpents on earth. Sage Astika intervened and saved Takshak, but the serpents were banished to the under-world, the nether world or the subterranean world below the surface of earth.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये षोडशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye ṣoḍaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 16th Canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 17, verse nos. 1-81:

This is the story of the son of Kush, named Atithi, who ascended the throne after his father Kush's death.

Introduction:

King Kush begot a son from his wife Kumudwati. The son was named Atithi, and this illustrious and well-educated son grew up to bestow happiness and joy to both the maternal and the paternal branches of his parent's families. Kush got Atithi married to princess of illustrious families. Like his father, Atithi too had excellent character, practiced self-control over himself, and was valiant, brave and courageous. That is why Kush adored his son Atithi as if the latter was a mirror image of the former.

Once, Kush went to help Indra in his war against a demon as was the tradition in his family, but unfortunately he was martyred in the battle. Just like the case of the moonlight vanishing when the moon sets, Kumudwati, the wife of king Kush, ended her life by burning herself in the funeral fire of her husband, and went to heaven along with him. At the time of going to join Indra in the war against the demon, Kush had instructed his ministers that in case something happens to him, then they must anoint his son Atithi on the throne as the next king.

So when Kush died, Atithi was made the next king in accordance with his father's wish in an elaborate coronation ceremony where Atithi gave liberal amounts of wealth as alms and donations. Atithi served his subjects with care and diligence like his father, endearing him to the citizens. He always kept his words and promises; once he gave something to anyone, he never asked for its return. Though Atithi had youth, glamour, wealth, fame and majesty, yet he was humble and modest, never showing any signs of pride, haughtiness, arrogance or ego.

He was a great diplomat and believed in discretion, minding his words and keeping his thoughts and plans secret till the objective was achieved, then only it became clear to others what was in his mind and what his planning was. Just like the case of the sun's light reaching and illuminating all the corners of the world when the sky is clear, so likewise Atithi had spread such a wide network of trusted spies in all the corners of the realm that nothing remained hidden from him; he kept himself abreast of all the developments, and all the things his subjects did and thought were known to him.

Everything he did and all the actions he took were for the universal good and well-being of all. He kept Dharma (goodness of thought and conduct; probity and propriety; righteousness and ethics) as a prioritised principle of his rule, and he never abandoned or compromised on this principle for the sake of self-interest or the greed of wealth. He accumulated wealth not for his personal enjoyment, comfort or indulgence, but for using it to help the poor and those in want, and for the general welfare of his subjects.

He loved and took care of his army like he would love and take care of himself, thereby making the army very faithful and loyal to him. The result was that there were no betrayals or traitors in his army, and none of his enemies could sow discord in the rank and file of the army by which they can create cracks or frictions in it. With the help of this army, Atithi protected sages and hermits who were engaged in their spiritual practices, as well as the property and wealth of the subjects in the far-flung parts of his extensive kingdom from being harmed, plundered, confiscated or usurped by his enemies. In the battle-fields, his enemies ran helter-skelter, and he emerged always victorious.

The earth reciprocated Atithi's benevolent nature and good governance by providing an abundance of everything needed in life, such as a good harvest, fruits, gems, minerals, animals for his army, and forests for timber and firewood, as well as rivers and other water-bodies that never went dry.

Just like all the gods obey Indra, all the kings, whether senior or junior, obeyed him. During the Ashwamedha Yagya (the horse sacrifice), Atithi liberally donated to priests and elders of his kingdom. Indra (the lord of rain) blessed him with good rainfall; Dharmraj (the patron deity of Dharma) granted wisdom, intelligence and conscientiousness to him and his subjects; Yamraj (the god of death) stopped spread of diseases that cause untimely death; and Kuber (the treasurer of heaven) flooded his treasury with wealth. Such glorious was king Aththi and his rule.

The present canto that describes in detail the policies, politics and statecraft which king Atithi followed is like a manual for good governance and maintenance of law and order in a kingdom under the successful stewardship of a wise, sagacious and prudent ruler.

With this background knowledge, now let us proceed with a detailed reading of this canto, verse-by-verse as follows:-

Verse no. 1:

**अतिथिन् नाम काकुत्स्थात्पुत्रन् प्राप कुमुद्वती।
पश्चिमाद्यामिनीयामात्प्रसादमिव चेतना॥ १७-१**

atithin nāma kākutsthātputran prāpa kumudvatī |
paścimādyāminīyāmātprasādamiva cetanā|| 17-1

17-1. Just like a person's mind and intellect become fresh and rejuvenated at the time of the day when hours of the late night and the early day form a union at dawn, so likewise the union of queen Kumudwati and king Aja resulted in begetting a son whose name was Atithi. He was brilliant, intelligent, and ready for a bright future.

[Note--Here, the queen is compared to the night, the king to the day, and their son to the mind and intellect that become fresh and bright at dawn, the hour when the night meets the day. Just like a person wakes up to face the challenges of a new day with vigour and

freshened mind, so was Atithi born as a boy who was bright, intelligent, and ready for the life ahead.]

Verse no. 2:

**स पितुः पितृमान्वंशन् मातुश्चानुपमद्युतिः।
अपुनात्सेवितेवोभौ मार्गवुत्तरदक्षिणौ॥ १७-२**

sa pituḥ pitṛmānvaṁśan mātuścānupamadyutiḥ |
apunātsevitevobhau mārgāvuttaradakṣiṇau|| 17-2

17-2. Just like the sun illuminates both the north and the south equally when it shines brilliantly in the sky, so likewise Atithi, who became well-educated and possessed exceptional brilliance, gave equal glory to the families of both his parents, i.e. the maternal family of his mother Kumudwati, as well as the paternal family of his father Kush.

Verse no. 3:

**तमादौ कुलविद्यानामर्थमर्थविदान् वरः।
पश्चात्पार्थिवकन्यानान् पाणिमग्राहयत्पिता॥ १७-३**

tamādau kulavidyānāmarthamarthavidān varah |
paścātpārthivakanyānān pāṇimagrāhayatpitā|| 17-3

17-3. King Kush, who was a celebrated scholar in the laws governing political science, statecraft, diplomacy, economics and public administration, first got his son Atithi educated and attain expertise in these fields of traditional knowledge that all the kings of this dynasty had been experts in. When Atithi was fully educated and ready to step into practical life, his father Kush got him married to daughters of kings of equal stature.

[Note--From what is said in this verse, we can safely assume that Atithi had many wives, though their names have not been specifically mentioned here. In ancient times, great monarchs had this tradition of establishing matrimonial alliances with many great kingdoms of their era as a political expedient to have friendly borders, and to extend their influence beyond their own borders without having to launch a military campaign.

Further, in case of an emergency, such as an attack by a stronger enemy, the king could rely on his relative kings for support.

Earlier, king Dasrath, father of Lord Ram and great-grandfather of Atithi, had three chief queens (Kaushalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra).]

Verse no. 4:

जात्यस्तेनाभिजातेन शूरः शौर्यवता कुशः।

अमन्यैतकमात्मानमनेकन् वशिना वशी॥ १७-४

jātyastenābhijātena śūrah śauryavatā kuśah |
amanyaitakamātmānamanekan vaśinā vaśī|| 17-4

17-4. Like his father Kush, Atithi too was also noble, righteous, brave and self-restrained. So therefore, Kush saw in his son Atithi his own mirror image, and inspite of being single he now considered himself as having a partner in his likeness in all respects.

Verse no. 5:

स कुलोचितमिन्द्रस्य साहायकमुपेयिवान्।

जघान समरे दैत्यन् दुर्जयन् तेन चावधि॥ १७-५

sa kulocitamindrasya sāhāyakamupeyivān |
jaghāna samare daityan durjayan tena cāvadhi|| 17-5

17-5. As was the custom of his family of the Solar Race, also known as the Ikshwaku dynasty, the kings of this race would fight against the demons to restore law and order on earth. In conformity with this tradition, once Kush went to help Indra in his war with the demon named Durjaya. However, during this conflict, Kush succeeded in killing Durjaya, but he also attained martyrdom himself.

[Note--According to mythological history of the Solar Race or the Ikshwaku dynasty, a famous king named Kakutstha, also known as king Puranjaya, had fought alongside Indra against demons. The story goes that during the epic god-demon cosmic war, the gods approached Kakutstha to help them against the demons. The king agreed on the condition that he would join the battle if he is allowed to sit on the shoulders of Indra. So, Indra transformed himself into a great hump-backed bull, and then Kakutstha rode on his back to eliminate the demons. Since the 'hump' of a bull is called 'kakud', the king earned the epithet of Kakutstha, one who rides a hump of a bull. The family descending from him came to be known as members of the Kakutstha dynasty.

Later on, the family acquired another title after another great king Raghu, henceforth being called members of the Raghu dynasty. King Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, the grandfather of Kush, and the great-grandfather of Atithi, too had fought alongside Indra against the demons. The most famous of these wars was against the demon named Shambara. King Dasrath was severely wounded, and his wife Kaikeyi saved his life by mounting the chariot, finishing the battle, and taking her husband to safety. Dasrath was mightily pleased at her courage and bravery, and promised her two boons which she kept in abeyance at that time. Later on, Kaikeyi exploited these two pending boons to send Lord Ram to the forest and anoint her son Bharat on the throne of Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 6:

तन् स्वसा नागराजस्य कुमुदस्य कुमुद्वती।
अन्वगात्कुमुदानन्दन् शशाङ्कमिव कौमुदी॥ १७-६

tan svasā nāgarājasya kumudasya kumudvatī |
anvagātkumudānandan śaśāṅkamiva kaumudī|| 17-6

17-6. Just like the case of the moonlight vanishing from sight when the moon sets, so likewise when king Kush died, his wife Kumudwati, the sister of the Naaga king Kumud, too died by burning herself in the funeral pyre of her husband.

[Note--Just like the moon and its light are inseparable from one another, and both go out of sight simultaneously, so likewise when Kush died, his wife Kumudwati died too by burning her mortal coil in the funeral pyre of her beloved husband, as they were inseparable from one another.]

Verse no. 7:

तयोर्दिवस्पतेरासीदेकः सिंहासनार्धभाक्।
द्वितीयापि सखी शच्याः पारिजातांशभागिनी॥ १७-७

tayordivaspaterāsīdekaḥ simhāsanārdhabhāk |
dvitīyāpi sakhī śacyāḥ pārijātāṁśabhāginī|| 17-7

17-7. Indra felt so obliged to Kush that when the latter died, Indra offered half of his heavenly throne to Kush, while Kumudwati went to share half of the Parijaat tree of heaven with Indrani, the consort of Indra.

[Note--In practical terms, saying Indra shared half of his throne with Kush, and Indrani sharing the fruits and flowers of the Parijaat tree with Kumudwati, the idea is that the couple was warmly welcomed and greatly respected by Indra for Kush's role in slaying the demon Durjaya, and to honour king Kush, Indra assigned him the honorary title of being his partner in ruling the heavens, so that Kush and Kumudwati shared the comfort and pleasures of heaven with Indra and Indrani respectively.

Further, it also means, by inference, that when Indra was away from heaven on some work, the regular administration was taken care of by Kush.]

Verse no. 8:

तदात्मसंभवन् राज्ये मन्त्रिवृद्धाः समादधुः।
स्मरन्तः पश्चिमामाज्ञान् भर्तुः सङ्ग्रामयायिनः॥ १७-८

tadātmasambhavan rājye mantrivṛddhāḥ samādadhuḥ |
smarantaḥ paścimāmājñān bhartuḥ saṅgrāmayāyinaḥ|| 17-8

17-8. In accordance with the instructions that Kush had given to his elderly ministers at the time of going to help Indra against the demon, his son Atithi was anointed as the next king of the kingdom. Thus, Atithi ascended the throne of his father in a coronation ceremony initiated by elderly ministers to fulfil the wishes of the late king Kush.

[Note--Kush had told his elderly ministers that in the event of his death, they should appoint his son Atithi as the next king.]

Verse no. 9:

ते तस्य कल्पयामासुरभिषेकाय शिल्पिभिः।
विमानन् नवमुद्वेदि चतुःस्तम्भप्रतिष्ठितम्॥ १७-९

te tasya kalpayāmāsurabhiṣekāya śilpibhiḥ |
vimānan navamudvedi catuḥstambhapraṭiṣṭhitam|| 17-9

17-9. The elderly ministers got a new grand pavilion erected on a raised platform supported by four pillars for the coronation ceremony of Atithi.

Verse no. 10:

तत्रैनन् हेमकुम्भेषु संभृतैस्तीर्थवारिभिः।
उपतस्थुः प्रकृतयो भद्रपीठोपवेशितम्॥ १७-१०

tatrainan hemakumbheṣu sambhṛtaistīrthavāribhiḥ |
upatasthuḥ prakṛtayo bhadrapīṭhopaveśitam|| 17-10

17-10. The senior members of the citizenry used golden jars to pour consecrated water brought from pilgrim places on king Atithi, who was seated on a ceremonial seat under a canopy of the platform, as part of rituals for his coronation.

Verse no. 11:

नदद्भिः स्निग्धगंभीरन् तूर्यराहतपुष्करैः।
अन्वमीयत कल्याणन् तस्याविच्छिन्नसंतति॥ १७-११

nadadbhiḥ snigdhagamābhīran tūryairāhatapuṣkaraiḥ |
anvamīyata kalyāṇan tasyāvicchinnaśantati|| 17-11

17-11. The pleasant music that was played by drums, trumpets and clarions during the coronation ceremony reverberated in all the directions, echoing the general sentiment of joy and happiness to welcome Atithi as the next king, as well as to declare his anointment as the next monarch of the kingdom.

Verse no. 12:

दूर्वायवाङ्कुरप्लक्षत्वग्भिन्नपुटोत्तरान्।

ज्ञातिवृद्धैः प्रयुक्तान्स भेजे नीराजनाविधीन्॥ १७-१२

dūrvāyavāṅkuraplakṣatvagabhinnapuṭottarān |
jñātivṛddhaiḥ prayuktānsa bheje nīrājanāvidhīn|| 17-12

17-12. The elders of the court waved light before Atithi in a ritual called doing 'aarti' to invoke the blessings of the god-of-light, i.e. the fire-god, and bestow upon him the light of glory, splendour, majesty and auspiciousness that the fire-god represents. For this ritualistic purpose, auspicious materials such as durba grass, sprouts of barley, bark of the banyan tree, and tender leaves were used.

Verse no. 13:

पुरोहितपुरोगास्तन् जिष्णुन् जैत्रैरथर्वभिः।

उपचक्रमिरे पूर्वमभिषेक्तुन् दिवजातयः॥ १७-१३

purohitapurogāstan jiṣṇun jaitiratharvabhiḥ |
upacakramire pūrvamabhiṣektun divjātayah|| 17-13

17-13. The elderly Brahmins stepped forward with the royal priest leading them. Then they anointed Atithi by reciting the Mantras (hymns) of the Atharva Veda which grant victory and invincibility to the patron.

[Note--Though it has not been specifically mentioned here, in all probability sage Vashistha led the ceremony as he was the chief priest of the royal family. All the kings of this dynasty were anointed on the throne by sage Vashistha.]

Verse no. 14:

तस्यौघमहती मूर्ध्नि निपतन्ती व्यरोचत।

सशब्दमभिषेकश्रीर्गङ्गेव त्रिपुरद्विषः॥ १७-१४

tasyaughamahatī mūrdhni nipatantī vyarocata |
saśabdamabhiṣekaśrīrgaṅgeva tripuradvīṣaḥ|| 17-14

17-14. The wonderful sight of the anointment water falling in a continuous stream over Atithi's head during the rituals appeared to be like the continuous stream of holy river Ganges falling on the head of Lord Shiva when the river first descended on earth from heaven.

[Note—After river Ganges descended from heaven and landed on the net of hairs on Lord Shiva's head, it remained there for some time, and then it cascaded down the slope of the Himalayas to go down to the plains, following a course overland, and finally entering the Eastern Ocean in an area called the Bay of Bengal. So, when the chief priest and other senior Brahmins poured sacred water on the head of Atithi during his coronation, this water flowed down from his head over his body, and finally reached the ground where it was collected to be sprayed all over the kingdom to symbolically establish the monarch's authority over the entire realm.

River Ganges is regarded as a celestial river of heaven. King Bhagirath, one of the great ancestors of Lord Ram, had done severe penance to bring this river down to earth and flow over the remains of his dead ancestors so that their souls could be purified and become eligible for salvation. Earlier, these ancestors were cursed by sage Kapil.

But when Ganges began descending on earth from high in the heavens, it presented a nightmare. It had tremendous speed and a mighty force that could rupture earth and split it into two at the point where it landed on the ground. The reason is obvious: the distance between earth and heaven is huge, and if anything falls from a great height from somewhere in outer space, then it is bound to gather speed and crash on earth with a tremendous force.

Besides this, the torrential, uncontrolled and unrestricted downpour of immense volumes of water would have caused a huge flood reminiscent of the doomsday deluge when everything would be submerged in water. The oceans and seas would have been overwhelmed, unable to accommodate this sudden surge of water's volume, resulting in them rising and flowing over shore to submerge whatever would be left of the landmass that might have escaped the fury of flooding by river Ganges.

Thus, if river Ganges was allowed to land directly on the surface of the earth, the latter would not only have shook and cracked it but also flooded it, thereby killing all life on it. So therefore, king Bhagirath prayed to Lord Shiva to save this creation from certain destruction. Lord Shiva then sat on the path of the mighty river as it descended with a roar from heaven to intercept it, and then trapped its flow in the thick maze of his matted hairs. This broke the river's tremendous speed and gigantic force. Later on, Lord Shiva allowed it to flow down to earth in a gentle stream by opening a small gap in his matted hairs through which the water of Ganges escaped.]

Verse no. 15:

स्तूयमानः क्षणे तस्मिन्नलक्ष्यत स बन्दिभिः।

प्रवृद्ध इव पर्जन्यः सारङ्गैरभिनन्दितः॥ १७-१५

stūyamānaḥ kṣaṇe tasminnalakṣyata sa bandibhiḥ |
pravṛddha iva parjanyaḥ sāraṅgairabhinanditaḥ|| 17-15

17-15. At that time, when the royal bards and singers sang praises and laurels in honour of king Atithi to eulogise his glories and extol his noble virtues, his excellent character, his wonderful qualities, it sounded like the case of the Chatak birds singing praises of the cloud for showering rain on them.

[Note--The Chatak bird, i.e. pied cuckoo, is a special species of bird that would drink only drops of rain water, especially that which falls during the constellation called Swati Nakshatra, which is the fifteenth asterism known as Arcturus, that occurs only during the winter season. This bird would prefer to die of thirst rather than to drink any other type of water. It would drink only those rain drops that fall directly in its open mouth, and so it keeps its head tilted towards the sky when the rain-bearing clouds appear overhead, waiting for the chance of the first droplets of rain released by the cloud to fall directly in its beak even before the other rain-drops reach the ground around it.

In this verse, this metaphor is used to emphasis that the bards and singers praised king Atithi in eloquent terms and hoped that he would bring prosperity, welfare, joy and happiness to his kingdom just like the clouds bring joy and happiness not only to the Chatak birds but also to the rest of the world by means of showering rain on earth, as rain is like a nectar for life on this planet.]

Verse no. 16:

तस्य सन्मन्त्रपूताभिः स्नानमद्भिः प्रतीच्छतः।
ववृधे वैद्युतश्चाग्नेर्वृष्टिसेकादिव द्युतिः॥ १७-१६

tasya sanmantrapūtābhiḥ snānamadbhiḥ praticchataḥ |
vavṛdhe vaidyutaścāgnervṛṣṭisekādiva dyutiḥ|| 17-16

17-16. When Atithi was anointed as the king with consecrated waters during his auspicious coronation ceremony, his radiance and majesty shone brilliantly just like the lightening in the sky looks all the more dazzling when the dust has settled during a heavy shower of rain.

[Note--With the coronation of Atithi, all doubts were removed as to what would happen to the kingdom after king Kush's death. This development cleared all uncertainties in the minds of the people about their future. This is why Atithi's coronation is compared to the illumination caused the brilliance of lightening when the sky is free from dust symbolising uncertainties and doubts in the people's minds.]

Verse no. 17:

स तावदभिषेकान्ते स्नातकेभ्यो ददौ वसु।
यावतैषान् समाप्येरन्यज्ञाः पर्याप्तदक्षिणाः॥ १७-१७

sa tāvadabhiṣekānte snātakebhyo dadau vasu |
yāvataiṣān samāpyeranyajñāḥ paryāptadakṣiṇāḥ|| 17-17

17-17. When the coronation rituals (of doing Aarti and pouring of consecrated water) were finished, king Atithi gave so much donation to the Brahmins who had participated in the ceremony that it would cover the entire cost of the Vedic sacrifices that they also undertook, and still left with so much surplus wealth which they could give to alms seekers later on when they did their routine sacrifices at the personal level.

[Note--The Aarti and pouring of sacred water were part of the coronation process; fire sacrifices, chanting of hymns from the Vedas, making charities and organising public feast were the other components that were undertaken either simultaneously or immediately after the main event.]

Verse no. 18:

ते प्रीतमनसस्तस्मै यामाशिषमुदैरयन्।
सा तस्य कर्मनिर्वृत्तैर्दूरन् पश्चात्कृता फलैः॥ १७-१८

te prītamanasastasmai yāmāśiṣamudairayan |
sā tasya karmanirvṛttairdūran paścātkṛtā phalaiḥ|| 17-18

17-18. The Brahmins were very pleased and satisfied with Atithi for giving them their due honour as well as granting them liberal amounts of wealth as gifts and largesse. Hence, they profusely blessed him and granted him many boons. But all these boons and their effectiveness were presently held in abeyance, because Atithi already had so much of good fortunes accumulated over time with him that first these had to be exhausted or consumed before new good fortunes could become effective and show their results.

[Note--Just like his treasury that overflowed with wealth, his good fortunes were also so much in abundance that he had no dearth of anything. Just like the case of a man being able to eat or drink only as much as his stomach would hold, and all surplus food is kept for future use, so likewise king Atithi enjoyed the accumulated good effects of his past deeds, and kept the blessings and boons granted to him by the overjoyed Brahmins for future effectiveness. This prudent handling of his assets in the form of good fortunes ensured that he would live a happy and contented life even in the distant future.]

Verse no. 19:

बन्धच्छेदन् स बद्धानान् वधार्हाणामवध्यताम्।
धुर्याणान् च धुरो मोक्षमदोहन् चादिशद्गवाम्॥ १७-१९

bandhacchedan sa baddhānān vadhārḥāṇāmavadhyatām |
dhuryāṇān ca dhuro mokṣamadohan cādiśadgavām|| 17-19

17-19. To commemorate the occasion of his coronation, king Atithi ordered that prisoners be set free from state prisons, those who were condemned to death should not be killed and their lives spared, the yoke tied on the necks of animals who carry burden should be removed and no animal should be forced to carry burden on their backs, and milk-giving cows should be allowed to let their calves drink milk as much as they wanted, and their milk should not be used by others while the calves remain hungry and thirsty.

Verse no. 20:

क्रीडापतत्रिणोप्यस्य पञ्जरस्थाः शुकादयः।

लब्धमोक्षास्तदादेशाद्यथेष्टगतयोऽभवन्॥ १७-२०

krīḍāpatatrinopyasya pañjarasthāḥ śukādayaḥ |
labdhamokṣāstadādeśādyatheṣṭagatayo'bhavan|| 17-20

17-20. Even the caged birds used for amusement and entertainment purposes, such as parrots, mynahs and others, having gained their freedom through his (Atithi's) order, became free birds once again. They were now free to go anywhere they pleased, and with this newly acquired freedom these birds flew everywhere in merry abundance.

Verse no. 21:

ततः कक्ष्यान्तरन्यस्तन् गजदन्तासनन् शुचि।

सोत्तरच्छदमध्यास्त नेपथ्यग्रहणाय सः॥ १७-२१

tataḥ kakṣyāntaranyastan gajadantāsanana śuci |
soottaracchadamadhyāsta nepathyagrahaṇāya saḥ|| 17-21

17-21. After that, king Atithi went to an adjacent room where an ivory throne with a seat covered with a fresh sheet of cloth was already kept prepared for him. Here he changed his new set of attires and donned royal robes befitting a great monarch when he attends his court.

[Note--The clothes he was wearing till now got drenched in the sacred water that was poured on him by priests during the religious rituals accompanying the coronation ceremony. So obviously he needed to change into new, dry clothes, and get dressed up in fine royal regalia, with all the accoutrements symbolising authority and sovereignty befitting a king, in order to attend his court.]

Verse no. 22:

तम् धूपाश्यानकेशान्तन् तोयनिर्णिक्तपाणयः।

आकल्पसाधनैस्तैस्तैरुपसेदुः प्रसाधकाः॥ १७-२२

tam dhūpāśyānakeśāntan toyanirṇiktapāṇayah |
ākālpasādhanaistaistairupaseduḥ prasādhakāḥ|| 17-22

17-22. Valets and stylists expert in personal care burned incense sticks to make the atmosphere fragrant, then cleaned their hands before applying cosmetics laced with perfumes on him, manicured his nails and hands, dried his hairs, and adorned him with royal robes and other royal accoutrements befitting a king.

Verse no. 23:

तेऽस्य मुक्तागुणोन्नद्धन् मौलिमन्तर्गतस्रजम्।
प्रत्यूपुः पद्मरागेण प्रभामण्डलशोभिना॥ १७-२३

te'sya muktāguṇonnaddhan maulimantargatasrajam |
pratyūpuḥ padmarāgeṇa prabhāmaṇḍalaśobhinā|| 17-23

17-23. Meticulously using strings of pearls and flowers, these expert valets and stylists tied a precious gem known as 'Padma-raag' (i.e. a sapphire of orange-red or pink colour) on his head, the shine and glitter of which spread in all the directions.

[Note--The gem is called Padma-raag because it is considered the best amongst gems just like the lotus flower is considered the best amongst flowers. The word 'Padma-raag' has two components--viz. 'Padma' meaning lotus, and 'raag' meaning colour or pollen. This gem is said to bestow leadership qualities, success, wellness, and all round positivity. In earlier times, it was usually worn as a tiara on the head of a king.]

Verse no. 24:

चन्दनेनाङ्गरागन् च मृगनाभिसुगन्धिना।
समापय्य ततश्चक्रुः पत्रन् विन्यस्तरोचनम्॥ १७-२४

candanenāṅgarāgan ca mṛganābhisugandhinā |
samāpayya tataścakruḥ patran vinyastarocanam|| 17-24

17-24. Then the expert personal stylists and valets decorated the king's face with small floral tattoos using a paste of sandalwood, musk, and a yellowish pigment called go-rochan.

[Note--'Go-rochan' is a rare yellowish pigment prepared from a cow's or other cattle's bile or gallstone. It is used in religious practices and is associated with auspiciousness, brings good fortune, and attracts positive energy according to Hindu beliefs.

The 'musk' is a highly aromatic substance found in the scent glands located in the abdomen of the male musk deer, specially in the animal's navel. Its highly aromatic

chemical was used as an active ingredients in perfumes that were used in earlier times for anointments during special occasions, or as a cosmetic product by the rich and the powerful.]

Verse no. 25:

आमुक्ताभरणः स्रग्वी हंसचिह्नदुकूलवान्।

आसीदतिशयप्रेक्ष्यः स राज्यश्रीवधूवरः॥ १७-२५

āmuktābharaṇaḥ sragvī haṁsacihnadukūlavān |
āsīdatisayaprekṣyaḥ sa rājyaśrīvadhūvaraḥ|| 17-25

17-25. Adorned with ornaments and garlands, with a silk shawl having motifs of swans draped over his shoulders and upper half of the body, king Atithi looked majestic and charming as if he was a young groom of a bride representing 'Rajya-laxmi', i.e. the deity of the kingdom.

[Note--In ancient folklore, a king was believed to have two wives, one was his queen, and the other was the deity of the kingdom he ruled. He was expected to show equal respect to both of them. While his queen rewarded him with a son who would inherit all the good qualities of the king and become his heir, the kingdom's deity would reward him with prosperity, well-being, security and happiness.]

Verse no. 26:

नेपथ्यदर्शिनश्छाया तस्यादर्शे हिरण्मये।

विराजोदिते सूर्ये मरौ कल्पतरोरिव॥ १७-२६

nepathyadarśinaśchāyā tasyādarśe hiraṇmaye |
virarājodite sūrye marau kalpataroriva|| 17-26

17-26. After he was fully dressed up, he stood before a golden-framed mirror to see how he looked. At that time, his image in the mirror resembled the reflection of the Kalpa-tree on the Sumeru mountain (i.e. the mountain of golden colour) during the hours of sun-rise.

[Note--During sun-rise, the rays of the sun fall in a slanting angle on the snow-covered summits of the Himalayas, giving an impression that they are covered in gold. The 'sumeru mountain' is a mythological mountain of gold in heaven and is considered as the center of the universe, and the Kalpa-tree is an evergreen tree also found in the heaven.

In this analogy, Atithi is likened to the Kalpa-tree, and his image in the golden-framed mirror to the reflection of the Kalpa-tree on the sumeru mountain.]

Verse no. 27:

स राजककुदव्यग्रपाणिभिः पार्श्ववर्तिभिः।

ययावुदीरितालोकः सुधर्मानवमान् सभाम्॥ १७-२७

sa rājakakudavyagrapāṇibhiḥ pārsvavartibhiḥ |
yayāvudīritālokaḥ sudharmānavamān sabhām|| 17-27

17-27. After being fully attired in royal robes and adorned with well-matched ornaments and other accoutrements, king Atithi went to his royal court where he would hold public audience. This court was in no way less wonderful or inferior to 'Sudharma', the court of gods in heaven. Behind Atithi followed a train of attendants and marshals of the court who carried royal insignia and coat-of-arms, hand-held fans and whisks, and other emblems of royalty. They raised slogans in honour of the king as they marched alongside him, and heralded his arrival in the royal court.

Verse no. 28:

वितानसहितन् तत्र भेजे पैतृकमासनम्।

चूडामणिभिरुद्धृष्टन् पादपीठन् महीक्षिताम्॥ १७-२८

vitānasahitan tatra bheje paitṛkamāsanam |
cūḍāmaṇibhiruddhr̥ṣṭan pādapiṭhan mahīkṣitām|| 17-28

17-28. Atithi went and sat on the ancestral throne of his father Kush; the throne had a royal canopy over it. The footstool kept below his feet bore signs of being rubbed by the crown jewels of countless kings who had bowed their heads before Atithi's ancestors in the past.

[Note--Though the word 'king' has been normally used to address the monarch of the kingdom of Ayodhya, but in actual fact these kings were 'emperors' before whom other junior kings would bow their heads to pay respects and affirm their loyalty to the emperor.]

Verse no. 29:

शुशुभे तेन चाक्रान्तन् मङ्गलायतनन् महत्।

श्रीवत्सलक्षणन् वक्षः कौस्तुभेनेव कैशवम्॥ १७-२९

śuśubhe tena cākṛāntan maṅgalāyatanan mahat |
śrīvatsalakṣaṇan vakṣaḥ kaustubheneva kaiśavam|| 17-29

17-29. Just like the presence of Lord Vishnu, whose chest bears the footprint of sage Bhrigu known as Srivatsa¹ as well as the Kaustav Mani (a rare kind of gem)², illuminates the surroundings and makes everyone present thrilled, so was also the case with king

Atithi whose presence in the royal court sent a wave of cheer and enthusiasm through the rank and file of all those who were present, and Atithi became the cynosure of all eyes as everyone present gazed at him with great admiration. The precious gem that he wore as a tiara on his head (refer verse no. 23) shone brilliantly, its dazzle virtually illuminating the audience hall.

[Note--¹This is the mark of the foot of sage Bhrigu which he had cast on the chest of Vishnu ones when he got annoyed with the Lord. The Lord is so enamoured of his devotees that instead of taking umbrage at this disrespect shown by the sage and punishing him for his misdemeanour, he had blessed the sage that his footprint would always remain on his chest as one of the jewels worn by Lord Vishnu. However, Laxmi was so angry at the temerity of sage Bhrigu that she cursed that henceforth she, in the form of wealth and material abundance, would always shun a Brahmin; it is believed that this is the reason why Brahmins, who are otherwise of a high birth, are always serving others in the society who are junior to them by birth for their monetary needs.

²Kaustav Mani—This is a glittering gem worn by Lord Vishnu, and it covers the sign of the Srivatsa. It was obtained at the time of the legendary churning of the ocean and automatically got lodged on the Lord's chest. {Mahabharat, Adiparva, 18.}]

Verse no. 30:

बभौ भूयः कुमारत्वादाधिराज्यमवाप्य सः।

रेखाभावादुपारूढः सामग्र्यमिव चन्द्रमाः॥ १७-३०

babhau bhūyaḥ kumāratvādādhirājyamavāpya saḥ |
rekḥābhāvādupārūḍhaḥ sāmāgryamiva candramāḥ|| 17-30

17-30. There was no opportunity for Atithi to have a title of a crown prince, because after attaining adulthood and getting married, he was directly appointed a king after the death of his father.

[Note--Usually, when his son becomes an adult, the king declares him his heir and bestows upon him the title of a 'crown-prince'. But as we have read earlier in this canto, king Kush had no time to do so, because soon after Atithi's marriage he was requested by Indra to help him in his battle against the demon named Durjaya, and during this conflict Kush had died. The ministers wasted no time and directly appointed Kush's son Atithi as the next king to fulfil Kush's wish. While alive, Kush was grooming Atithi to eventually become a king, and Atithi's adolescent days were spent in this preparation. When his education was complete and he became eligible to be declared a crown-prince as soon as he entered adulthood, fate intervened and his father died.

In short, Atithi got elevated directly to the stature of a king without having to pass through the intermediate phase of being a crown-prince.]

Verse no. 31:

प्रसन्नमुखरागन् तन् स्मितपूर्वाभिभाषिणम्।
मूर्तिमन्तममन्यन्त विश्वासमनुजीविनः॥ १७-३१

prasannamukharāgan tan smitapūrvābhibhāṣiṇam |
mūrtimantamamanyanta viśvāsamanujīvinah|| 17-31

17-31. King Atithi was of a very friendly and amiable nature; he was always happy and cheerful, never showing annoyance or irritation with anyone, and his face perpetually had a smile on it. This is why he was very dear to his subjects and attendants, who never feared him, had confidence in him, and treated him as a personified form of the virtues of faith and trust.

{To wit, his people had full faith in him that he would not get angry with them and punish them. They trusted and had confidence in him, and therefore were frank with him, never attempting to save their own skin by saying lies or using cunning to escape his wrath, because they were confident that their king would never get angry and punish them for telling the truth. The people owed allegiance to him and obeyed him not out of fear, but out of respect for him.}

Verse no. 32:

स पुरन् पुरहूतश्रीः कल्पद्रुमनिभध्वजाम्।
क्रममाणश्चकार द्यान् नागेनैरावतौजसा॥ १७-३२

sa puran purahūtaśrīḥ kalpadrumanibhadhvajām |
kramamāṇaścakāra dyān nāgenairāvataujasā|| 17-32

17-32. When Atithi, whose majesty, authority and magnificence was no less than that of Indra, the king of heaven, rode his mighty elephant which rivalled Erawat, the elephant of Indra, to take a round of his capital city of Ayodhya as its king, the city, decorated colourfully with ornamental flags, buntings, banners, festoons and flowers, resembled the Kalpa Tree (the tree of heaven) with its branches, leaves, sprouts and flowers, and compared favourably with heaven in its beauty, splendour, opulence and magnificence.

{It appeared that Ayodhya was a second heaven, one that was located on earth rather than in the sky.}

Verse no. 33:

तस्यैकस्योच्छ्रितन् छत्रन् मूर्ध्नि तेनामलत्विषा।
पूर्वराजवियोगौष्मन् कृत्स्नस्य जगतो हृतम्॥ १७-३३

tasyaikasyocchritan chatran mūrdhni tenāmalatviṣā |
pūrvarājaviyogauşmyan kṛtsnasya jagato hṛtam|| 17-33

17-33. The white coloured royal umbrella spread over his head and a matching crown (of polished silver) that king Atithi wore proclaimed to the world an era of peace, tranquillity, equality, justice, tolerance, brotherhood and goodwill under the new king Aththi, and they also removed the atmosphere of grief that the subjects of the kingdom were suffering from at the loss of their beloved and gracious king Kush, Atithi's father.

[Note--The white colour of Atithi's canopy and crown served two primary purposes--one, they gave the message of mourning at the loss of king Kush, and two, they declared, on behalf of the new king Atithi that there would be peace, tolerance, brotherhood and justice for all under his rule.

The people of Ayodhya were uncertain about their own future after their previous king Kush died. So by this symbolic method of using the colour 'white', Atithi quietly conveyed the message that he is a peace-loving person, and everything would be okay under him; the people need not worry and become apprehensive about anything.

And that, he (Atithi) has reluctantly accepted to become a king, and he is still mourning the death of his father. He signalled that he was not happy to become a king at this age, he is not rejoicing at ascending the throne, he has not wilfully done it, but that he had no choice after the passing away of his father.]

Verse no. 34:

धूमादग्नेः शिखाः पश्चादुदयादंशवो रवेः।

सोऽतीत्य तेजसान् वृत्तिन् सममेवोत्थितो गुणैः॥ १७-३४

dhūmādagneḥ śikhāḥ paścādudayaḍaṁśavo raveḥ |
so'tītya tejasān vṛttin samamevotthito guṇaiḥ|| 17-34

17-34. It is usually observed that the smoke of a fire precedes the appearance of its flames, and the dazzling rays of the sun are seen after it has risen in the sky, but the glory, remarkable qualities and excellent virtues of king Atithi reversed this order because his fame, glory and reputation were already well established even before he ascended the throne to become a king.

[Note--When the firewood is burned, first comes the smoke and then comes the flame. In the case of the sun, when it rises in the horizon its disc can be seen with a naked eyes, but its blinding rays come a little while later. But in the case of Atithi, he was well-known and respected in the world, his qualities, virtues and character were famous even before he was proclaimed a king. Hence, Atithi's transition from a well-known and well-respected prince to a famous king who was loved by his subjects was smooth and effortless.]

Verse no. 35:

तन् प्रीतिविशदैर्नेत्रैरन्वयुः पौरयोषितः।

शरत्प्रसन्नैर्ज्योतिर्भिर्विभावय इव ध्रुवम्॥ १७-३५

tan prītiśadairnetrairanvayuh paurayoṣitaḥ |
śaratprasannairjyotirbhirvibhāvaya iva dhruvam|| 17-35

17-35. Just like the stars in a clear winter night are seen to revolve around the polar star, so likewise the eyes of the women folk of the city were centred on king Atithi as he took a round of the city; they gazed at him with admiration and affection; he became a focus, a cynosure of all eyes.

Verse no. 36:

अयोध्यादेवताश्चैनन् प्रशस्तायतनार्चिताः।

अनुदध्युरनुध्येयन् सांनिध्यैः प्रतिमागतैः॥ १७-३६

ayodhyādevatāścainan praśastāyatanārcitāḥ |
anudadhyuranudhyeyan sām̐nidhyaiḥ pratimāgataiḥ|| 17-36

17-36. The deities established in all the magnificent temples of Ayodhya, small and big, looked upon king Atithi and showered their grace upon him.

[Note--During his tour of the city, Atithi stopped at all the shrines and offered his worship to the presiding deity. The deities were very pleased with him, and all of them, individually as well as collectively, blessed him.]

Verse no. 37:

यावन्नाशयायते वेदिरभिषेकजलाप्लुता।

तावदेवास्य वेलान्तन् प्रतापः प्राप दुःसहः॥ १७-३७

yāvannāśyāyate vedirabhiṣekajalāplutā |
tāvadevāsya velāntan pratāpaḥ prāpa duḥsahaḥ|| 17-37

17-37. Hardly the throne on which he sat during the pouring of sacred water on him during the coronation ritual had dried, than his fame and glory reached the shores of the oceans.

[Note--To wit, king Atithi became instantly famous no sooner than he ascended the throne of Ayodhya. As we have read earlier, his ancestors had extended their influence all over the Indian sub-continent during their Digvijay military campaigns, from the north to the south, and from the far east to the western shores. This victory campaign was also known as Vishwa-jeet Yagya, i.e. a religious sacrifice done after fulfilment of the

commitment to conquer the whole world. Refer: canto 4 which narrates one such campaign of king Raghu. All the subsequent heirs of the throne successfully maintained this hold.

The news of the demise of king Kush spread quickly throughout the length and width of the realm, and equally quickly the news of Atithi taking over the reins of his father's kingdom too spread.]

Verse no. 38:

वसिष्ठस्य गुरोर्मन्त्राः सायकास्तस्य धन्विनः।

किन् तत्साध्यन् यदुभये साधयेयुर्न संगताः॥ १७-३८

vasiṣṭhasya gurormantrāḥ sāyakāstasya dhanvinaḥ |
kin tatsādhyān yadubhaye sādhayeyurna saṁgatāḥ|| 17-38

17-38. Which goal or objective was there in this world that could not be attained, gained or achieved when the wise counsel of the preceptor Vasistha and the powerful arrows of an expert archer that Atithi was, worked in coordination with each other?

[Note--Since king Atithi would always follow the advice of his learned guru sage Vasistha, there was nothing that would be impossible to do. Sage Vasistha was a wise, erudite and experienced court advisor as well as a spiritually powerful person who had seen first-hand the rule of a number of ancestors of Atithi, including Lord Ram, noting the mistakes they had made and lessons that could be learnt by them. Hence, he was well-versed and well-equipped to give correct and fruitful advice to Atithi that could not only be implemented and be viable in practical terms, but would also be good for the king and the kingdom. Therefore, since Atithi acted in accordance with Vasistha's sage advice, there was nothing that could not be achieved, attained or gained by the king.]

Verse no. 39:

स धर्मस्थसखः शश्वदर्थिप्रत्यर्थिनान् स्वयम्।

ददर्श संशयच्छेद्यान्व्यवहारानतन्द्रितः॥ १७-३९

sa dharmasthasakhaḥ śaśvadarthipratyarthinān svayam |
dadarśa saṁśayacchedyānvvyavahārānatandritaḥ|| 17-39

17-39. In consultation with wise advisors and those who followed the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility in thought and conduct), king Atithi personally presided over disputes brought to his court, and decided the matter judiciously without any bias or favour. He was never lazy about his duties, and was a selfless judge in all matters.

[Note--Atithi attended all court matters personally, not leaving things to his subordinates. This system of administration eliminated corruption and favouritism, and ensured a transparent and well-balanced delivery of justice.]

Verse no. 40:

ततः परमभिव्यक्तसौमनस्यनिवेदितैः।

युयोज पाकाभिमुखैर्भृत्यान्विज्ञापनाफलैः॥ १७-४०

tataḥ paramabhivyaktasaumanasyaniveditaiḥ |
yuyoja pākābhimukhairbhṛtyānvijñāpanāphalaiḥ|| 17-40

17-40. Just like watching the buds of fruits on a tree one can get an idea of how many fruits the tree would yield, so likewise by observing the face of king Atithi his attendants and those who came to him with disputes could judge what rewards or punishments were in store for them.

[Note--It has been asserted earlier in verse no. 31 that Atithi had a smiling face, spoke politely with everyone, and was never angry, yet occasions presented themselves when someone had committed a grave crime or had gone against the laws of the land and violated Dharma, and when Atithi heard of it, it was natural that he would become annoyed with that person. Obviously in such situations, he frowned, looked upset, and his face showed annoyance and irritation. But this was usually an exception rather than the norm. So therefore, when anyone approached him with some request, his benevolent look and smile hinted to the petitioner that he should expect his request fulfilled. To what extent, that depended on the type of request, and the decision of king Atithi could be judged by the expression on his face. Similarly, the type of punishment that he would give to a person depended on the seriousness of the crime, and the expression on the king's face hinted at the extent of his annoyance, and consequentially the type of punishment he was contemplating giving.]

Verse no. 41:

प्रजास्तद्गुरुणा नद्यो नभसेव विवर्धिताः।

तस्मिंस्तु भूयसीन् वृद्धिन् नभस्ये ता इवाययुः॥ १७-४१

prajāstadguruṇā nadyo nabhaseva vivardhitāḥ |
tasmim̐stu bhūyasīn vṛddhin nabhasye tā ivāyayuh|| 17-41

17-41. During the reign of king Kush, the subjects of the kingdom were prosperous and well-provided for like the river during the month of Sravan (when there is enough water in it; roughly July-August). When Atithi took over the reins of the kingdom, the subjects became better-off and more prosperous and happy like the river that overflows its banks during the Bhado month (i.e. latter half of the rainy season when there is so much water

flowing in the river that surplus spills on to the surrounding countryside; roughly mid August-mid September).

[Note--The rivers are ordinarily fed by rain water alone during the Sravan season, but later on in the Bhado season water cascading down from the mountain ranges add more volume of water to the river, causing floods. The subjects of Ayodhya had no shortage of anything during the reign of king Kush, and they were contented and happy. When Atithi took over, prosperity and well-being increased manifold times, and the kingdom became very wealthy and prosperous, much more than what it was during the time of Atithi's father Kush. During Atithi's reign, the treasury and granary were full; there was excellent harvest; trade and commerce boomed; gardens, forests and orchards were full of green trees, flowers and fruits.]

Verse no. 42:

यदुवाच न तन्मिथ्या यद्ददौ न जहार तत्।
सोऽभूद्भग्नव्रतः शत्रूनुद्धृत्य प्रतिरोपयन्॥ १७-४२

yaduvāca na tanmithyā yaddadau na jahāra tat |
so'bhūdbhagnavrataḥ śatrūnuddhṛtya pratiropayan|| 17-42

17-42. King Atithi kept his words--what he promised he fulfilled it. Whenever he gave anything to anyone, he never took it back. But when it came to his enemies, he would break this rule--i.e. he would uproot his enemies without having any qualms and even said that he would punish them for going against him, but once he had vanquished his enemies he would then re-established them.

[Note--King Atithi was of a very forgiving and magnanimous disposition. On the one hand he threatened his enemies of dire consequences for opposing him, even going to the extent of confiscating their kingdoms and properties, but when they surrendered or were conquered by him, he would forgive them and re-appoint them back on their thrones or positions. This attitude endeared him to everyone, and the result was that no one wished to oppose him.

Normally, battles are conducted to first defeat an enemy and then usurp his kingdom and property. But Atithi was exception to this rule: he would first threaten his enemy with annihilation and vanquish him if he still challenged Atithi, but after attaining victory, he would restore the enemy's kingdom back to him, thereby going back on his own words of complete annihilation. And after giving the enemy's kingdom back to him, Atithi sought a little amount of wealth as a token tribute. This also went against his nature of not taking back what is given. This however created a very positive environment and other rulers willingly submitted themselves before him.

This strategy of giving the opposing king his respect and crown back to him served Atithi well in the long run as it earned him friends and goodwill.

We have read earlier in canto 4 that when king Raghu went on a campaign of conquest, known as 'Digvijay', he too would first vanquish the opposing king, and then

restore his kingdom back to him after taking some token wealth as tribute in the form of a gift. Only those few adversaries who stubbornly fought him and refused to surrender, or strike a compromise deal, were ultimately crushed in the ensuing fierce battle. But such cases were rare and exception rather than the norm. This strategy pays well for the emperor because as the news spreads that he would not dethrone the conquered king but give his crown and kingdom back after accepting a token amount as tribute, with a commitment by the conquered king of his loyalty and allegiance to the throne of the emperor, in this case the monarch of Ayodhya, all other small or big kings, and those who did not want destruction for no rhyme or reason, would be motivated not to confront the emperor but to make a peaceful compromise deal with him. In this way, the emperor succeeded in expanding his influence and authority over large number of kingdoms without shedding a drop of blood, with an added bonus of goodwill and friendly ties, and having genuine allies and friends all around him who are willing to help and support him in case the need arose, as compared to forcibly dethrone a king and usurp his crown, because the disenfranchised king would vow vengeance and retribution later on, leading to insurgency, revolt and anarchy in far-flung realms, which would be difficult to control and also drain the resources once the emperor departs for his own kingdom.]

Verse no. 43:

वयोरूपविभूतीनामेकैकन् मदकारणम्।

तानि तस्मिन्समस्तानि न तस्योत्सिचिषे मनः॥ १७-४३

vayorūpavibhūtīnāmekāikan madakāraṇam |
tāni tasminsamastāni na tasyotsiçiṣe manah|| 17-43

17-43. Usually it is observed that when a person has any of the three attributes of (i) youth, (ii) beauty and charm, and (iii) wealth, authority, fame and influence, then the person becomes haughty, arrogant, proud and egoist. But king Atithi had all these three qualities in him, yet he was humble, modest, graceful, dignified and polite, showing no signs of any negative traits as outlined here. Atithi was a noble person who had no special 'airs' about him; he had no sense of superiority about him.

Verse no. 44:

इत्थन् जनितरागासु प्रकृतिष्वनुवासरम्।

अक्षोभ्यः स नवोऽप्यासीद्दृढमूल इव द्रुमः॥ १७-४४

itthan janitarāgāsu prakṛtiṣvanuvāsaram |
akṣobhyaḥ sa navo'pyāsiddṛḍhamūla iva drumah|| 17-44

17-44. Because of his noble character and amiable nature, the affection and respect that the subjects of king Atithi had for him increased day-by-day as time passed, and in his turn the king too reinforced his authority and sway over the realm as time passed, gaining

genuine loyalty and allegiance from his subjects, which helped him to remain stable and undisturbed like a large tree which has deep roots and extended branches that are strong.

[Note--King Atithi's subjects loved him; he treated them as part of his extended family. There was no dissension, discontent, dissatisfaction, revolt, or dirty politics and back-biting, no betrayal and traitors. Everyone liked him, and regarded themselves as fortunate to have such a wonderful person as their ruler. Since the people were devoted to king Atithi, no enemy king even tried to sow seeds of dissension because such sly moves would surely backfire on the latter.]

Verse no. 45:

अनित्याः शत्रवो बाह्या विप्रकृष्टाश्च ते यतः।

अतः सोऽभ्यन्तरान्नित्याञ्छट्पूर्वमजयद्रिपून्॥ १७-४५

anityāḥ śatravo bāhyā viprakṛṣṭāśca te yataḥ |
ataḥ so'bhyantarānnityāñṣaṭpūrvamajayadripūn|| 17-45

17-45. With the wisdom that enemies within are more dangerous than those outside, king Atithi vanquished the six types of enemies that reside within a person. These six internal enemies that ruin a person are the following--Kaam (lust, passion, desire), Krodha (anger, wrathfulness), Lobha (greed, rapacity), Moha (delusions, longing, attachment), Mada (arrogance, pride, arrogance, egoism), and Matsarya (jealously, envy).

[Note—¹This same idea has been expressed by Vibhishan, the younger brother of the king of Lanka, to Ravana as narrated in Tulsidas' epic story of the Ramayana, known as 'Ram Charit Manas', in its Sundar Kand, Doha no. 38.

External enemies are at a distance; they are not with someone every moment of the day; they can be seen and vanquished by force. But a person's bad character and negative traits are his internal enemies that ruin from within like a termite that quietly gnaws at the wood and makes it hollow from within. With this wise thinking, king Atithi ensured that he overcomes all these six negativities and fix them suitably.]

Verse no. 46:

प्रसादाभिमुखे तस्मिंश्चपलापि स्वभावतः।

निकषे हेमरेखेव श्रीरासीदनपायिनी॥ १७-४६

prasādābhimukhe tasmimścapalāpi svabhāvataḥ |
nikaṣe hemarekheva śrīrāsīdanapāyini|| 17-46

17-46. The goddess of good fortune, wealth, prosperity and well-being, i.e. Laxmi, is fickle and inconsistent by nature, but when she came in contact with king Atithi, who had a calm and stable disposition, possessed excellent character and virtues, as well as was a

loyal follower of Dharma, she was so much influenced by him that she decided to abide with him perpetually.

Thus, like the mark that pure gold makes on touchstone which cannot be removed or effaced (even by the acid test of nitric acid), good fortune, wealth and prosperity also remained steady with Atithi. To wit, Laxmi and Atithi became inseparably from one another.

[Note--When gold is rubbed against touchstone to check its purity, it leaves a distinct coloured mark or streak on the surface of the stone. This is used by jewellers to check the purity of gold. Real gold leaves a solid, bright yellow mark or streak. The exact shade of this streak or mark determines what and how much other metals, usually silver and copper, have been mixed in gold. For silver, the shade is bluish, while for copper it is reddish. Other base metals such as iron, brass etc. either leave no streak, or a grey/dark mark. Further, if nitric acid is added to the mark made by pure gold on touchstone, it won't be affected, but if the gold is not pure then either the mark will fade away or change colour.

The idea is that just like pure gold leaves a stable mark when rubbed on touchstone, so likewise the best form of good fortunes were found permanently with king Atithi. Good fortunes favoured Atithi at all times, and this favour stood the test of adversities, changing times and circumstances.

To wit, the relationship between the goddess of fortune, wealth, prosperity and well-being, i.e. goddess Laxmai, and her patron king Atithi was stable.]

Verse no. 47:

कातर्यन् केवला नीतिः शौर्यन् श्वापदचेष्टितम्।

अतः सिद्धिन् समेताभ्यामुभाभ्यामन्वियेष सः॥ १७-४७

kātaryan kevalā nītiḥ śauryan śvāpadaceṣṭitam |
ataḥ siddhin sametābhyāmubhābhyāmanvīyeṣa saḥ|| 17-47

17-47. Relying only on diplomacy and politics while dealing with adversaries is tantamount to timidity and cowardice (because the king is afraid of a direct military confrontation), and on the other hand using only force, brutality and bloodshed to make the adversary surrender is nothing but extreme cruelty and is equivalent to the nature of wild, blood-thirsty animals (if the adversary is not given a chance for peaceful means to settle disputes).

Therefore, king Atithi employed a judicious mixture of both the tools of diplomacy and politics, as well as strength, power and military force to achieve success in his objectives.

[Note--If a king is weak in military strength, or lacks courage, bravery and power-of-arms, then he would avoid direct confrontation with his enemy in the battle-field. He would employ back-channel ways to strike a compromise to avoid a direct military clash. Hence, excessive use of politics and diplomacy indicates that the king wishes to avoid

facing a more powerful and strong adversary. This strategy is indicative of a king who is a coward and timid person, not someone who is bold, courageous and brave.

Similarly, relying solely on military strength, and use of force and brutality in the battle-field as a tool to vanquish the enemy, is a clear indication of a blood-thirsty king who relishes mayhem and plunder to enforce his authority on others who are reluctant to submit to him.

King Atithi, on the other hand, used wisdom and prudence in his dealings with other kings and adversaries. He would balance the two strategies of political diplomacy and military might to ensure that all others are kept under control. Atithi first tried diplomacy and the famous four political tools of Saam, Daan, Danda and Bheda, to gain an upper hand, but should these efforts fail, then only would he employ the strength of his military might and the strength of his own arms to subdue the enemy.

These four political tools are: 'Saam'—conciliation, persuasion, gentlemanly behaviour; politeness, courteousness as well as other diplomatic methods (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 21); (ii) 'Daan'—liberal use of largesse, gifts, aids, donations, charity and other material and monetary rewards and help, which morally made the recipient obliged to the king (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22); (iii) 'Danda'—use of punishment, force and other coercive methods (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 107); and (iv) 'Bheda'—creating dissension, division, discord, doubts, and exploiting weakness of the opponent (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43).

Refer also to verse no. 68 of this canto no. 17 in this connection.]

Verse no. 48:

न तस्य मण्डले राज्ञो न्यस्तप्रणिधिदीधितेः।

अदृष्टमभवत्किंचिद्व्यभ्रस्येव विवस्वतः॥ १७-४८

na tasya maṇḍale rājño nyastapraṇidhīdīdhiteḥ |
adr̥ṣṭamabhavatkiṁcidvyabhraśyeva vivasvataḥ|| 17-48

17-48. Just like nothing remains hidden from view in a cloudless day when the sun's bright light illuminates everything below the sky in every direction, so likewise nothing remained secret or unknown from the knowledge of king Atithi as he had spread a well-organised and complex network of trusted spies throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom.

{Further, just like a single sun shining overhead illuminates all the directions of earth, so likewise a single king Atithi at the helm would learn whatever was happening in any part of his extensive kingdom through the medium of a network of trusted and talented spies.}

[Note--In this context, refer also to verse no. 51 herein below.]

Verse no. 49:

रात्रिदिवविभागेषु यदादिष्टन् महीक्षिताम्।

तत्सिषेवे नियोगेन स विकल्पपराङ्मुखः॥ १७-४९

rātrīṁdivavibhāgeṣu yadādiṣṭan mahīkṣitām |
tatsiṣeve niyogena sa vikalpaparāṅmukhaḥ|| 17-49

17-49. King Atithi diligently and faithfully followed, day and night, all the principles of statecraft devised by wise and learned teachers of political science and administration.

[Note--King Atithi was a strict follower of rules and regulations even in his personal life. He was never careless in it. He set an example for others, for one should first practice himself what he expects others to do.]

Verse no. 50:

मन्त्रः प्रतिदिनन् तस्य बभूव सह मन्त्रिभिः।

स जातु सेव्यमानोऽपि गुप्तद्वारो न सूच्यते॥ १७-५०

mantraḥ pratidinan tasya babhūva saha mantribhiḥ |
sa jātu sevya māno'pi guptadvāro na sūcyate|| 17-50

17-50. King Atithi regularly held confidential meetings with his trusted ministers and advisors where all state matters were discussed, and basic contours of plans were shaped in a strict confidential environment. The king would then reserve important decisions for himself, would discuss the various options available to him to execute his decisions with his council of ministers and advisors in such a way that even they had no idea what the king actually intends to do, then he went about implementing his final decision so wisely that those who were assigned to implement them on the ground had no idea what the objective was, and only when the intended outcome was out in the open did everyone come to know about the king's actual ideas and his plans to put them into effect.

[Note--Like a wise and sagacious ruler, king Atithi held all his cards close to his chest, maintained strict secrecy on his plans, followed many options available to him simultaneously in order to keep everyone guessing and mislead spies, but privately keeping a hawk's eye as to how each of the different options is playing out on the ground. When the final result came out, then only the world came to know what was in his mind initially. This strategy had two obvious benefits--one, if his plans failed, he would quietly make an exit without letting himself down and face ridicule, and two, if his plans succeeded he got what he wanted without a fuss, or the chance of leakage of his plans to his enemies which would frustrate all his efforts.

In the context of this verse, refer to verse no. 53 herein below.]

Verse no. 51:

परेषु स्वेषु च क्षिप्तैरविज्ञातपरस्परैः।

सोऽपसर्पेर्जजागार यथाकालन् स्वपन्नपि॥ १७-५१

pareṣu sveṣu ca kṣiptairavijñātaparasparaiḥ |
so'pasarpairjajāgāra yathākālan svapannapi|| 17-51

17-51. King Atithi had employed spies to keep close tabs on his employees as well as his opponents and enemies in such a clever way that even these spies did not know who their companions were, and whether the person on whom the spy was expected to keep his eye on was not playing the reverse role of keeping a tab on the spy himself.

As a result of this strategy, king Atithi was virtually awake at all times of the day and night, because any event that occurred when he slept would also be known to him as soon as he woke up through this network of trusted spies.

[Note--This is why it has been said earlier that king Atithi had employed a complex web of spies to keep a tab on each development in his kingdom--refer: verse no. 48 herein above.

Further, hiding the identity of spies ensured that none of them would know who the other fellow was, and everyone feared that every move of his is being watched by someone unknown to him. This ensured that everyone remained alert about their own conduct, and guarded themselves against being caught on the wrong foot. This strategy made implementation of law and order easy in the kingdom.

This complex strategy of making people spy on each other, and each appointed spy reporting directly to the king in strict confidentiality, with the carrot of gifts dangling before the reporter for correct reporting, served the king to get right information from a cross section of society. The king would cross-check facts by hearing the report of different spies, and if there was a miss-match he would appoint a third or fourth person to verify facts, again with the temptation of gift and promotions. If this verification report said that the primary report was correct, he would reward the first group of spies in addition to rewarding the ones who verified the report to be correct, and if the first reporting was biased or wrong or fudged, he would reprimand the spy and threaten him with punishment and demotion the next time.

So in brief, the king managed fair-play and good governance in his kingdom by employing wisdom, strategy, wit and prudence.]

Verse no. 52:

दुर्गाणि दुर्गहाण्यासंस्तस्य रोद्धुरपि दिवषाम्।

न हि सिंहो गजास्कन्दी भयाद्गिरिगुहाशयः॥ १७-५२

durgāṇi durgrahāṇyāsamstasya roddhurapi divṣām |
na hi simho gajāskandī bhayādgiriguhaśayaḥ|| 17-52

17-52. King Atithi was so brave, courageous and bold that he would fearlessly encircle an enemy in a battle to outflank and defeat him. He built a fort with fortified walls, ramparts and gateways around his capital city so that no enemy would be able to take him by surprise. It was like the case of a fearless lion who has the ability to subdue wild elephants by attacking them, but himself would retire to its den in a mountain cave to sleep (instead of sleeping in the open).

[Note--King Atithi built a strong fort to protect his city of Ayodhya from his enemies so that no harm comes to his subjects and his enemies won't be able to plunder the city without first breaching the walls and the gateway of the fort, something which would be impossible in practical terms while Atithi was the ruler. Although he had his palace within the safety perimeter of the walls of the fort, it does not mean that he was afraid of his enemies or fighting them, but that he wanted safety for his citizens and not being caught unaware by his enemies, for they would first have to break the fort before invading the city, and it would give the king sufficient time to encircle the enemy outside the fort and defeat him even before the enemy could strike at the city itself.

When the lion retires to the den to sleep, it is not because he is afraid of any wild animal, but because he does not want to be attacked and killed when he is not on guard. The same argument holds good for king Atithi--he slept in his palace within the safe perimeter of the fort walls not because he was afraid of confronting an enemy, but because he wanted to play it safe and safeguard himself from sudden and unexpected attack from any quarter while he was asleep.]

Verse no. 53:

भव्यमुख्याः समारम्भाः प्रत्यवेक्ष्यानिरत्ययाः।

गर्भशलिसधर्माणस्तस्य गूढन् विपेचिरे॥ १७-५३

bhavyamukhyāḥ samārambhāḥ pratyavekṣyāniratyayāḥ |
garbhaśalisadharmāṇastasya gūḍhan vipecire|| 17-53

17-53. Whatever king Atithi did was for universal good, welfare and well-being of the society. Before going ahead with any plan or taking any action, he would calmly weigh all the pros and the cons of his move, so that once he put his plan into action he got it done smoothly without a hitch or opposition.

Just like the case rice grain developing secretly within the husk, and coming out in the open when the rice grains are mature and the outer covering of the husk is removed during thrashing, so likewise king Atithi kept all his plans secret and they were revealed only when their implementation was complete.

[Note--In this context, refer also specially to verse no. 50 herein above.]

Verse no. 54:

अपथेन प्रववृते न जातूपचितोऽपि सः।

वृद्धौ नदीमुखेनैव प्रस्थानन् लवणाम्भसः॥ १७-५४

apathena pravavṛte na jātūpacito'pi saḥ |
vṛddhau nadīmukhenaiva prasthānan lavaṇāmbhasaḥ|| 17-54

17-54. In spite of possessing great strength, powers and potentials, king Atithi remained modest, humble, polite and amiable, for he never violated norms of dignity, decency, goodness and nobleness, just like the case of the mighty ocean that always maintains its greatness and dignity by observing its limits and boundaries even when in high tide, for it would go to a certain extent on the shore and retract soon thereafter, and if still there is any excess water in it then that excess volume of water flows down the path of the rivers that empty into the ocean, which may cause the rivers to swell during high tide because of the push back of the water from the ocean.

[Note--This is why the water of a river tastes salty near its mouth where it opens into the ocean. But again here, the ocean maintains its limits, because it knows that the aquatic animals and plants living in the water of the river won't be able to survive the salinity of the ocean's sour water, and would die. So therefore, it does not go far into the channel formed by the river except for a small distance at its mouth.]

Verse no. 55:

कामन् प्रकृतिवैराग्यन् सद्यः शमयितुन् क्षमः।

यस्य कार्यः प्रतीकारः स तन्नेवोदपादयत्॥ १७-५५

kāman prakṛtivairāgyan sadyaḥ śamayitun kṣamaḥ |
yasya kāryaḥ pratikāraḥ sa tannaivodapādayat|| 17-55

17-55. King Atithi had the ability to remove any kind of difficulty or dissatisfaction that his subjects might face, but his reign was so exceptionally good that no such opportunity ever arose when he needed to remove such a situation, as his subjects were well looked after, and they faced no problems of any kind that would make them dissatisfied or uneasy.

Verse no. 56:

शक्येष्वेवाभवद्यात्रा तस्य शक्तिमतः सतः।

समीरणसहायोऽपि नाम्भःप्रार्थी दवानलः॥ १७-५६

śakyeṣvevābhavadyātrā tasya śaktimataḥ sataḥ |
samīraṇasaḥāyo'pi nāmbhaḥprārthī davānalaḥ|| 17-56

17-56. King Atithi did not use force against weak kings and those junior to him, and if the need arose he would use his powers only against powerful kings who were defiant, challenging him and his authority. It is like the case of a forest fire that is fanned and supported by the power of the wind, for it burns only trees, twigs and shrubs that stand against it defiantly, but never touches water bodies in the forest because the water has a cool and comforting nature, and it also does not stand in the way of the fire as do trees, shrubs and twigs, which in turn bear the brunt of the fire's rage.

[Note--Though the water is also an enemy of fire, yet the fire does not burn it because the water has a cool temperament, and it does not stand in the way of the fire. That is why the fire skips forest water bodies such as lakes, ponds etc. On the other hand, the trees, twigs and shrubs stand opposing the fire, blocking its way, so they bear the brunt of the fire's rage.

Junior and smaller kings would be polite towards king Atithi, so they escaped his wrath. But powerful kings confronted him, and so they had to bear the brunt of his wrath for their defiance.]

Verse no. 57:

**न धर्ममर्थकामाभ्यान् बबाधे न च तेन तौ।
नार्थन् कामेन कामन् व सोऽर्थेन सदृशस्त्रिषु॥ १७-५७**

na dharmamarthakāmābhyān babādhe na ca tena tau |
nārthan kāmēna kāman va so'rthena sadṛśastriṣu|| 17-57

17-57. King Atithi never sacrificed the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility of thought and conduct) for the sake of Artha and Kaam (wealth and fulfilment of desires respectively). Similarly, he did not allow himself to be too obsessive about Dharma to the extent that Artha and Kaam suffered or were compromised. Neither did he let Kaam suffer due to preoccupation with Artha, and vice versa.

In brief, he treated Dharma, Artha and Kaam as equals, never allowing himself to seem to favour one over the other. He used wisdom, prudence and intelligence to effectively strike a judicious balance between these three basic aspects or components of life.

[Note--A simple example would make the concept clear. Dharma says that one should make donations, but it does not mean donating every single penny one has and then go begging for himself. Artha means acquisition of wealth, but it does not mean getting rich by unscrupulous means, hoarding wealth, and not giving oneself sufficient time for rest and recreation and fulfilment of personal desires, known as Kaam. Similarly, uncontrolled pursuit of Kaam may lead to neglect of Dharma as well as Artha, such as neglect of one's religious obligations and business interests.]

Verse no. 58:

हीनान्यनृपकर्तृणि प्रवृद्धानि विकुर्वते।

तेन मध्यमशक्तीनि मित्राणि स्थापितान्यतः॥ १७-५८

hīnānyanrṣpakartṛṇi pravṛddhāni vikurvate |

tena madhyamaśaktīni mitrāṇi sthāpitānyataḥ|| 17-58

17-58. If immoral and unscrupulous people of low intellect and those lacking in wisdom become friends, then they would certainly create some nuisance that would land a man in serious trouble and an embarrassing situation. Similarly, if a wealthy person who is richer than oneself becomes a friend, then it is quite sure that the former would do something (out of jealousy) that would create hurdles in one's financial well-being.

So therefore, king Atithi was careful to follow a middle path of having friends and advisors who were neither too foolish and corrupt, nor so rich that they would be jealous of his prosperity and slyly try some trick to usurp the king's wealth.

[Note--A great piece of wisdom is incorporated in this verse which any wise person can implement in his own life to avoid an embarrassing situation and unnecessary difficulties.

The idea is that fools as friends are better avoided, and similarly one should make friends with those who are of an equal status financially, neither richer or poorer, because either way there are good chances that the so-called friend is jealous of one's wealth and so would either try tricks to get some of his wealth or at least do something that would undermine his finances.]

Verse no. 59:

परात्मनोः परिच्छिद्य शक्त्यादीनान् बलाबलम्।

ययावेभिर्बलिष्ठश्चेत्परस्मादास्त सोऽन्यथा॥ १७-५९

parātmanoḥ paricchidya śaktyādīnān balābalam |

yayāvebhirbaliṣṭhaścetparasmādāsta so'nyathā|| 17-59

17-59. If a situation arose when king Atithi had to face an enemy, then he would calmly weigh the strengths and weaknesses of his enemy with his own advantages and shortcomings. If, after deliberations and due diligence about the pros and the cons of the situation, he came to the conclusion that he had an upper hand over his enemy and would be able to vanquish the latter with certainty, then only would he proceed with confronting his opponent and fight with him. Otherwise, he would keep quiet and adopt other means (such as diplomacy) to bring the issue to an end.

[Note--This is another piece of wisdom which a person can implement in his own life. Being belligerent and confrontationist without application of mind as to the consequences of taking any rash action is a foolish thing to do. One must first weigh all the pros and cons of a given situation before deciding what to and what not to do. A collision course often backfires.

Refer also to verse no. 67 herein below.]

Verse no. 60:

कोशेनाश्रयणीयत्वमिति तस्यार्थसंग्रहः।

अम्बुगर्भो हि जीमूतश्चातकैरभिनन्द्यते॥ १७-६०

kośenāśrayaṇīyatvamiti tasyārthasaṁgrahaḥ |
ambugarbho hi jīmūtaścātakairabhinandyate|| 17-60

17-60. King Atithi collected wealth (by way of taxes and tributes from his vassal states) for two primary reasons: one, wealth gives a person respect and self-confidence in this world, and two, he is able to make charities and give alms to the needy who come to him, which in turn earns him goodwill in the society¹.

It is like the case of the Chatak bird (pied cuckoo) that welcomes and praises only those clouds that shower rain, and neglects other clouds in the sky².

[Note—¹King Atithi collected taxes in a judicious and compassionate manner, keeping in mind that no one was put to any kind of inconvenience. He levied taxes according to the paying abilities of his subjects, never employing coercive methods or punishing those who could not pay due to some justified and valid reason. King Atithi was magnanimous and sympathetic to the problems of his subjects, and he never exacted taxes to fill his coffers that would amount to forceful extortion or coercion.

His tax-collection mechanism reminded one of how the Chatak bird (pied cuckoo) quenches its thirst. The bird drinks only rainwater when it falls directly from the clouds. The cloud pours large volumes of water on earth during the rainy season, so it simply does not matter to anyone if a few drops are drunk by the bird. Similarly, no one ever felt exploited or harmed if some miniscule part of their income was taken as tax by the king, for they all knew that the king won't spend it on luxury and indulgences, but plough it back for the welfare of the kingdom in one way or another. So everyone was happy and willing to pay their share of the tax, without grumbling or trying to hide the income.

²Just like the Chatak bird that would praise only rain-bearing clouds, people praise only those persons who have wealth and use their resources for common good, like king Atithi used to do. A wealthy person is always sought after, and it is an irony that if the tide of good fortunes turn against him some day in the future, the same person is neglected by those who used to seek his company and sang his praises.]

Verse no. 61:

परकर्मापहः सोऽभूदुद्युतः स्वेषु कर्मसु।

आवृणोदात्मनो रन्ध्रन् रन्ध्रेषु प्रहरन्निपून्॥ १७-६१

parakarmāpahaḥ so'bhūdudyutaḥ sveṣu karmasu |
āvr̥ṇodātmano randhran randhreṣu praharanripūn|| 17-61

17-61. King Atithi used countermeasures to neutralise bad intentions of his enemies to undermine him, and at the same time he continued with his own endeavours to enhance his stature and authority.

He took the benefit of the weaknesses of his enemies to destroy, sideline or neutralise them, and learnt from their mistakes to continuously improve himself.

[Note--King Atithi carefully analysed the weaknesses and shortcomings of his enemies that had made them vulnerable, and then looked at himself to see if he had any such negative traits. Upon close introspection if he found something missing or wrong with himself, he would immediately take steps to rectify it. This strategy ensured that he continued to get better and stronger by the day.]

Verse no. 62:

पित्रा संवर्धितो नित्यन् कृतास्त्रः सांपरायिकः।
तस्य दण्डवतो दण्डः स्वदेहान्न व्यशिष्यत॥ १७-६२

pitṛā saṁvardhito nityan kṛtāstraḥ sām̐parāyikaḥ |
tasya daṇḍavato daṇḍaḥ svadehānna vyaśiṣyata|| 17-62

17-62. King Atithi had a skilled army of excellent archers, cavalry, elephants and infantry that he inherited from his father, late king Kush. This army was expert in use of weapons and military manoeuvres. Atithi loved his army, treated it well, and took good care of it as he would treat his own self.

{The obvious result was that the army was very loyal to him. No enemy could sow seeds of dissention or betrayal in its rank and file. The soldiers were willing to lay down their lives for their king.}

Verse no. 63:

सर्पस्येव शिरोरत्नन् नास्य शक्तित्रयन् परः।
स चकर्ष परस्मात्तदयस्कान्त इवायसम्॥ १७-६३

sarpasyeva śīroratnan nāsyā śaktitrayan paraḥ |
sa cakarṣa parasmāttadayaskānta ivāyasam|| 17-63

17-63. Just like the case of it being impossible to take away the jewel, known as the 'Mani' present on the hood of a special category of serpents¹, the enemies of king Atithi were not be able to snatch away or deprive the king of the triple powers that he possessed. These three powers were (i) prabhu-shakti (the power of authority bestowed upon a great king by his subjects as well as destiny), (ii) mantra-shakti (the mystical

powers that come when one has harnessed the cosmic energy incorporated in the different Mantras of the scriptures), and utsāha-shakti (the power and energy to do something that comes with decisiveness, confidence, consistency, courage, mettle, enthusiasm, fervour, passion, agility and deep interest).

But on the other hand, king Atithi had the inherent ability to pull these three powers away from his enemy, just like the case of a magnet naturally drawing a piece of iron towards itself without any effort, thereby making the opponent weak and submissive before him. {To wit, Atithi shook the confidence and courage of his enemies, filling them with doubt and indecisiveness, thereby making them falter and surrender before him as they lost sufficient strength and boldness to face him.}

[Note—¹According to the legend, there is a family of serpents that carry illuminated gem-like globule on their heads. It is a secretion from some gland on their hoods, and in the dark it glows and effuses a fluorescent light that the serpent uses to see its way. Since this globule is part of the serpent's hood, it cannot be taken away from the reptile unless one would kill the serpent.

Likewise, the three virtues possessed by king Atithi were part of his natural character, and therefore could not be snatched by anyone. These three qualities of Atithi were like a virtual 'gem' that he possessed, and they could not be stolen or taken away from him as long as he was alive.]

Verse no. 64:

वापीष्विव स्रवन्तीषु वनेषूपवनेष्विव।

सार्थाः स्वैरन् स्वकीयेषु चरुर्वेश्मस्विवाद्रिषु॥ १७-६४

vāpīṣviva sravantīṣu vaneṣūpavaneṣviva |

sārthāḥ svairan svakīyeṣu cerurveśmasvivādrīṣu|| 17-64

17-64. King Atithi's power, influence and majesty were of such a great magnitude that in his realm traders went about their business freely, without facing any hurdle of any kind. Their journeys for trade purposes from one place to another were not hindered by rivers, lakes, forests and mountains, or by wild animals and highway thieves, for all these entities posed no more danger to the safety and security of tradesmen.

[Note--King Atithi ensured that trade and commerce thrived in his kingdom. He made proper arrangements for short or long journeys of traders through the length and breadth of the kingdom by building bridges, digging wells, constructing rest houses on trade routes, exchange houses, constructing roads through mountains to cut journey time, and appointing guards and soldiers to protect caravans from attack by wild animals, thieves and plunderers.

Traders moved fearlessly through forests and mountains as if they were playgrounds, crossed rivers and streams effortlessly on bridges or boats, and had plenty of places for refreshment on the way. Security and safety of traders was the responsibility

of the state. Hence, trade and commerce flourished in Atithi's kingdom, and with it came prosperity and wealth.]

Verse no. 65:

तपो रक्षन्स विघ्नेभ्यस्तस्करेभ्यश्च संपदः।

यथास्वमाश्रमैश्चक्रे वर्णैरपि षडंशभाक्॥ १७-६५

tapo rakṣansa vighnebhyaṣtaskarebhyāśca saṁpadaḥ |
yathāśvamāśramaiścakre varṇairapi ṣaḍaṁśabhāk|| 17-65

17-65. King Atithi ensured that sages, hermits and pious people could pursue their spiritual endeavours, austerities and penances unhindered, without facing disturbances of any kind; he protected his subjects and their wealth from the fear of thieves and marauders.

As state tax, he took only one-sixth of the revenue earned by his subjects which were classified into four Varnas and four Ashrams¹, but in accordance to their ability to pay.

{He never used coercion or force on anyone, and allowed a lot of flexibility to his subjects to pay their taxes voluntarily. People paid cheerfully because they knew that whatever they were paying as taxes would be used for the good and welfare of the society and protection of the kingdom by maintaining a large army, for king Atithi never used state wealth for personal use and enjoyment like other rulers did. If for some reason a person or class of the society could not pay taxes, then Atithi would forgo his due tax. If the need arose, on the other hand, he would help his subjects from state funds to meet emergencies. All these things made him very dear to his people who never shied away from paying their taxes if they could.}

[Note--Hindu society is divided into four Varnas and four Ashrams. The four Varnas are Brahmins (elderly, learned class of people who serve as teachers, moral preceptors and guides), Kshatriyas (warrior class responsible for administration, law and order, and protection of the society), Vaishyas (responsible for trade and commerce), and Shudras (service class).

The life of a person is roughly divided into four parts called Ashrams--viz Brahmacharya (first quarter of life when a person studies and acquires skills to face challenges of life ahead), Grihastha (married life, raising of a family; during this phase a person engages in different vocations and professions), Sanyas (withdrawal from active engagement in work; transferring responsibilities to the next generation, and preparing for complete renunciation later on), and Vaanprastha (moving away from home to lead a serene and peaceful life in a hermitage or some retirement home; concentration on spiritual way of life, doing meditation, contemplation and penance; preparing for final exit from the world).

From the above classification it is obvious that only adults and those who engaged in active work that yielded revenue, such as trading, farming, business, professions, vocations, craftsmanship etc. could pay tax. This in effect means only one-fourth of the

population was roughly liable to pay state tax, and then also they had to pay only one-sixth of their annual revenue, which amounts to approx. 16-16.5%.]

Verse no. 66:

**खनिभिः सुषुवे रत्नन् क्षेत्रैः सस्यन् वनैर्गजान्।
दिदेश वेतनन् तस्मै रक्षासदृशमेव भूः॥ १७-६६**

khanibhiḥ suṣuve ratnan kṣetraiḥ sasyan vanairgajān |
dideśa vetanan tasmai rakṣāsadrśameva bhūḥ|| 17-66

17-66. The magnanimous, liberal and fair manner in which king Atithi dealt with his subjects, earth too played its part to reciprocate his noble gesture by being very charitable and liberal with him, providing him with an abundance of natural resources--such as the mines that gave lots of gems and precious metals for the king's treasury, the fields that yielded rich crops that made the king's granary full and overflowing, and the forests that gave him large number of elephants for his extensive army.

Verse no. 67:

**स गुणानान् बलानान् च षण्णान् षण्मुखविक्रमः।
बभूव विनियोगज्ञः साधनीयेषु वस्तुषु॥ १७-६७**

sa guṇānān balānān ca ṣaṇṇān ṣaṇmukhavikramah |
babhūva viniyogajñaḥ sādhanīyeṣu vastuṣu|| 17-67

17-67. King Atithi, who was an able and valiant warrior and an expert commander of a great and competent army like Kartikeya (the commander of the army of gods and a son of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati), was well versed in all the doctrines of statecraft, military science, politics and kingdom. He was an expert in the six expedients of military science, statecraft and politics, and knew how to employ them to his benefit.

Hence, when dealing with unfriendly kings, he adopted a two-pronged approach based on traditional wisdom pertaining to principles and doctrines of political science and military science. Before taking any action, he would weigh all the pros and the cons of the situation¹.

So therefore, he would analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing king to determine how best to deal with him², and at the same time study threadbare the shortcomings and advantages of his own army vis-à-vis the enemy's army to draw a practical plan to help him attain his military objectives³.

[Note--¹Refer verse no. 59 herein above.

²The six expedients of political science to deal with a challenger king are the following: Sandhi (agreement with other kings of various matters; peace treaty); Vighraha (waging a

war when it cannot be avoided); Yaana (expedition of conquest when he is mightier than enemy, or when the enemy is in weak position); Asana (remaining in one's capital when there is peace; not unnecessarily provoking other kings); Dvaidi-bhava (when faced by two enemies simultaneously, then making peace with one so that all energy and resources could be focused on the other enemy); San-sraya (seeking shelter with and help from another king if he himself is not strong enough to counter the enemy).

³The six types or categories of strength of a king's army are the following--Ratha-bala (strength of the fleet of war chariots); Gaja-bala (strength of war elephants in the army); Ashva-bala (number of war horses; strength of the cavalry); Pada-bala (strength of foot soldiers; infantry); Mula-bala (back-up or reserve forces; logistical support); and Jala-bala (strength of the armada; ships; navy).]

Verse no. 68:

**इति क्रमात्प्रयुञ्जानो राजनीतिन् चतुर्विधाम्।
आ तीर्थादप्रतीघातन् स तस्याः फलमानशे॥ १७-६८**

iti kramātprayuñjāno rājanītin caturvidhām |
ā tīrthādapratīghātan sa tasyāḥ phalamānaśe|| 17-68

17-68. King Atithi adopted the four established tools of statecraft and politics (rājanītin caturvidhām) that wise and great kings use to govern, resolve disputes, overcome enemies, subdue opposition, maintain law and order and stability within their jurisdiction, and avoid unnecessary wars and conflicts. They were used as tools to make others submit to the king, and as a standard method to deal with opponents, both within and without the kingdom. They were used to spy on dissidents and traitors.

These four tools are (i) Saam (conciliation, persuasion, use of politeness, as well as other diplomatic methods), (ii) Daan (largesse, gifts, donations, charity and other material and monetary rewards), (iii) Danda (punishment, force and other coercive methods), and (iv) Bheda (creating dissension, division, exploiting weakness of the opponent).

The result was that king Atithi was able to achieve his goals without difficulties, was rewarded for his efforts, and gained universal fame and popularity as a judicious ruler who succeeded in maintaining stability and rule of law in his kingdom, while at the same time being able to tame dissention and overcome enemies. His rule was uninterrupted and free from betrayals, oppositions, scandals and enemies, both within and without the kingdom¹.

[Note—¹Refer also to verse no. 47 and the note appended to it in this canto no. 17.

These four instruments of statecraft have been referred to by Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram in his book 'Ram Charit Manas' as follows:

(i) 'Saam'—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 21; (ii) Daan—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22; (iii) Danda—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand,

Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 107; and (iv) Bheda—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43.

These four were standard methods used by kings and emperors as a matter of state policy. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38. The rulers maintained hold over their kingdom, found about disloyal subjects, evil designs of neighbouring countries, and in the case of war to subdue, defeat and conquer a much larger and stronger enemy by employing these four techniques in varying proportions.

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Verse no. 69:

**कूटयुद्धविधिज्ञेऽपि तस्मिन्सन्मार्गयोधिनि।
भेजेऽभिसारिकावृत्तिन् जयश्रीर्वीरगामिनी॥ १७-६९**

kūṭayuddhavidhijñe'pi tasminsannmārgayodhini |
bheje'bhisārikāvṛttin jayaśrīrvīragāminī|| 17-69

17-69. Although king Atithi knew how to deceive his enemy in warfare and play dirty tricks on the battle-field, yet he always played straight and a fair game with his enemies. This principle of following 'Dharma Yuddha' (i.e. waging a war in accordance with principles of ethical conduct and fair play, rather than adopting deceit, conceit and fraudulent methods with an enemy to somehow defeat him by hook or by crook; an unethical warfare) endeared the king to the deity of victory inasmuch as she would always side with him in any confrontation.

{To wit, since Atithi followed rules of ethical conduct even in the battle-field, he was honoured and respected even by his enemies, and the deity of victory was pleased with him and would always ensure that he won a war.}

Verse no. 70:

**प्रायः प्रतापभग्नत्वादरीणान् तस्य दुर्लभः।
रणो गन्धद्विपस्येव गन्धभिन्नान्यदन्तिनः॥ १७-७०**

prāyaḥ pratāpabhagnatvādarīṇān tasya durlabhah |
raṇo gandhadvipasyeva gandhabhinnānyadantīnaḥ|| 17-70

17-70. When his enemies saw king Atithi in the battle-field, his reputation and might were so tremendous that they lost the heart and the courage to confront him, and would

escape without a fight, because no king dared to challenge and fight with Atithi whose valour, courage, power, bravery and strength were formidable. It was like the case of ordinary elephants running away out of fear when confronted by a wild elephant from whose temples the ichor oozes out during the animal's period of rut. The result was that Atithi won a battle easily without much bloodshed.

[Note--The ichor is a scented viscous liquid that seeps out of the glands on the sides of the forehead and the temples of wild male elephants during their rutting or mating period. During this period, the elephant becomes restless and reckless, trampling everything that comes in its way. Hence, all other animals, including other elephants, avoid such an elephant.]

Verse no. 71:

प्रवृद्धौ ह्रीयते चन्द्रः समुद्रोऽपि तथाविधः।

स तु तत्समवृद्धिश्च न चाभूत्ताविव क्षयी॥ १७-७१

pravṛddhau hrīyate candraḥ samudro'pi tathāvidhaḥ |
sa tu tatsamavṛddhiśca na cābhūttāviva kṣayī || 17-71

17-71. After reaching the fullness of its disc during the night of the full-moon, the moon begins to gradually decrease in size, and so is also the case with the ocean whose tides are at their height during the full-moon night, but gradually begin to decrease as the size of the moon's disc decreases.

But in the case of king Atithi it was the opposite: his glory, fame, majesty and reputation increased gradually over time like the disc of the moon and the tide of the ocean from the new moon night till the full moon night, but unlike the moon and the ocean, king Atithi's glory, fame, majesty and reputation went on increasing day-by-day instead of declining.

{To wit, unlike the moon's disc and the tide of the ocean that waxes and wanes over time, the majesty, fame, reputation and glory of king Atithi were always on the rise.}

Verse no. 72:

सन्तस्तस्याभिगमनादत्यर्थन् महतः कृशाः।

उदधेरिव जीमूताः प्रापुर्दातृत्वमर्थिनः॥ १७-७२

santastasyābhigamanādatyarthan mahataḥ kṛśāḥ |
udadheriva jīmūtāḥ prāpurdātṛtvamarthinaḥ || 17-72

17-72. Just like the case of rain-less clouds coming to the ocean seeking water, and the ocean obliges these clouds by transferring so much moisture to them that the latter become rich with rain, coming to be called 'rain-bearing clouds'. Then, in their turn, these

clouds go all over the land showering their treasure of rain for the benefit of all creatures on earth. So likewise was the case with king Atithi, for scholars with limited financial resources came to him for support, and the king gave them so much wealth as largesse or reward that these scholars themselves became donors and went to distribute their newly acquired riches to those who needed them.

[Note--The clouds collect water as water vapour evaporating from the ocean, and stores it as rain; then these rain-bearing clouds shower their wealth of rain over earth for the benefit of all creatures. Similarly, scholars and learned men came to Atithi seeking alms or aid, and the king would give them so much wealth that these people would themselves become donors for others.]

Verse no. 73:

**स्तूयमानः स जिह्वाय स्तुत्यमेव समाचरन्।
तथापि ववृधे तस्य तत्कारिद्वेषिणो यशः॥ १७-७३**

stūyamānaḥ sa jihvāya stutyameva samācaran |
tathāpi vavṛdhe tasya tatkāridveṣiṇo yaśaḥ|| 17-73

17-73. All the deeds and actions of king Atithi were worthy of praise, but if anyone heaped praises on him on his face, the king would become shy to hear himself being praised, such was his humility and modesty. Yet, his fame, glory, goodness of virtues, excellent nature and fineness of character traits went on spreading and enhancing day-by-day.

Verse no. 74:

**दुरितन् दर्शनेन घ्नंस्तत्त्वार्थेन नुदंस्तमः।
प्रजाः स्वतन्त्रयांचक्रे शश्वत्सूर्य इवोदितः॥ १७-७४**

duritan darśanena ghnāṁstattvārthena nudāṁstamaḥ |
prajāḥ svatantrayāṁcakre śaśvatsūrya ivoditaḥ|| 17-74

17-74. Just like the case of the rising sun removing all darkness and illuminating the world, the ascendance of king Atithi on the throne of the kingdom and his appearance before his subjects removed all their fears, uncertainties and consternations, giving them hope and reason to be happy.

Since Atithi himself was enlightened and wise, he imparted his knowledge and wisdom to his subjects, removing the darkness of their ignorance, just like the case of the sun, which is self-illuminated, illuminating the rest of the world and removing its darkness with its light by its presence.

[Note—¹King Atithi was following the example shown by his grandfather, Lord Ram, who had also regularly held assemblies where he would advise his subjects and enlighten them on various topics covering all spheres of life. The result was Lord Ram was praised by one and all; everyone felt very happy to have the Lord as their king, guardian and protector; they lauded and revered him, and obeyed his commands, because the Lord's selfless sermons concerned their own good and welfare, both spiritual and worldly, showing them the path that was righteous and proper. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2 that precede Doha no. 30; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 47.}]

Verse no. 75:

इन्दोरगतयः पद्मे सूर्यस्य कुमुदेऽशवः।

गुणास्तस्य विपक्षेऽपि गुणिनो लेभिरेऽन्तरम्॥ १७-७५

indoragatayaḥ padme sūryasya kumudeṁśavaḥ |
guṇāstasya vipakṣe'pi guṇino lebhire'ntaram|| 17-75

17-75. The moon's light is not compatible with and accepted by the kamal flower (the lotus), and similarly the sun's light is not compatible with and accepted by the kumudini flower (the water lily). But the character, qualities and virtues of king Atithi were so excellent that even his enemies and adversaries, as well as his friends, would like to inculcate them to improve themselves; they would, though grudgingly, accept that they have a lot to learn from king Atithi; and they would willingly try to emulate his example in their own lives.

[Note--The lotus flower opens only in the sunlight and closes in the night under the light of the moon, even though the sun's light is hot and the moon's light is cooling and soothing. The lotus seems to be selective by accepting the virtues of one, i.e. the light of the sun which illuminates the world, and reject those of the other, i.e. the moon whose light soothes the world with its cooling effect.

The reverse is true with the water lily flower--for it opens in the light of the moon and closes in the light of the sun, thereby reversing the preferences of the lotus flower.

But the excellence of Atithi's character, qualities and virtues were such that his enemies and adversaries as well as friends would accept them, learn from them, and try to improve themselves by inculcating Atithi's noble character, excellent qualities and immaculate virtues in their personal lives.]

Verse no. 76:

पराभिसंधानपरन् यद्यप्यस्य विचेष्टितम्।

जिगीषोरश्वमेधाय धर्म्यमेव बभूव तत्॥ १७-७६

parābhisamdhānaparan yadyapyasya viceṣṭitam |
jigīṣoraśvamedhāya dharmyameva babhūva tat|| 17-76

17-76. At the time of performing the Ashwamedha Yagya (the horse-sacrifice ceremony), king Atithi set out on a campaign of Digvijay (i.e. the conquest of the world or large parts of the earth in order to establish and reiterate his authority and sovereignty over the empire established by his ancestors, as well as to expand his own realm and add new territories) as part of the ritual. But even during this campaign, when Atithi was obliged to somehow defeat his opponents and bring them under his command, he always followed the principles of Dharma in order to subdue his opponents, rather than using any kind of unfair means to attain his goals.

[Note--Performance of the Ashwamedha Yagya was a tradition amongst great emperors of ancient times in order to ensure that the vast empire under them remains under control, and the kings and governors remain loyal to them. It was also done to expand their influence as well as the existing boundaries of their kingdom. But noble emperors never went on a Digvijay campaign to plunder and loot other kingdoms, to kill, and to reduce other cities and kingdoms to ruin and rubble.

A great emperor was expected to perform at least one such horse-sacrifice in his life time. A horse was released to go in any direction and wherever it wanted to go, and a huge army, usually led by the emperor himself or by one of his kin, accompanied the horse to protect it. When the horse reached the kingdom of another king, the latter would either submit without a fight and pay some token tribute to the emperor to accept his sovereignty, or would hold the horse and stop its progress. Then a fight erupted, and the emperor would defeat the opposing king. Once victorious, the emperor, if he was kind and gracious, would return the crown and the throne to the opposite king after taking some tribute from the latter and a commitment of remaining loyal to the emperor, or otherwise the emperor would appoint his own governor to rule the newly acquired kingdom on his behalf.

Since this 'horse-sacrifice' was given a religious tone and an obligation that great kings must fulfil, usually he met no resistance, and the rulers of the territories through which the horse passed would welcome the emperor and give him due respect. This ensured that there was no spilling of blood and creating havoc and ruin caused by unnecessary battles, but rather created goodwill and brotherhood between great kings and their kingdoms, something crucial for prosperity, peace, commerce and all-round welfare of the subjects of both the kingdoms. But in case some ruler was stubborn enough to resist the emperor, a battle followed.

While attempting to subdue his opponent king, Atithi would always follow the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, and goodness of conduct and thought) while dealing with his adversary, instead of employing unfair means to bring his opponent to heel.

Before Atithi, king Raghu had also set out on a military campaign of Digvijay as narrated in canto no. 4.]

Verse no. 77:

एवमुद्यन्प्रभावेण शास्त्रनिर्दिष्टवर्त्मना।

वृषेव देवो देवानान् राजान् राजा बभूव सः॥ १७-७७

evamudyānprabhāveṇa śāstranirdiṣṭavartmanā |
vṛṣeva devo devānān rājñān rājā babhūva saḥ|| 17-77

17-77. In this way, by following the principles of Dharma laid down in the scriptures while carrying out his dealings with everyone in this world on a day-to-day basis, king Atithi's influence, stature and power gradually grew and he became established in the community of kings on earth as an honourable emperor who was respected and obeyed by one and all, just like Indra is in the community of gods in heaven.

{To wit, king Atithi acquired a stature amongst the kings of earth that was equivalent to the stature that Indra, the king of gods, has in heaven.}

Verse no. 78:

पञ्चमन् लोकपालानान् तमूचुः साम्ययोगतः।

भूतानान् महतान् षष्ठमष्टमन् कुलभूभृताम्॥ १७-७८

pañcaman lokapālānān tamūcuḥ sāmīyogataḥ |
bhūtānān mahatān ṣaṣṭhamaṣṭaman kulabhūbhṛtām|| 17-78

17-78. People began calling him the 'fifth Lokpal' (custodian of the world) because king Atithi's valour, powers, strength, stature and glories were equivalent to those of Indra and the other three Lokpals (custodians or guardians of the four corners of the world)¹.

Since he had great intrinsic character and immaculate virtues which made him virtually indispensable for maintenance of law and order in the world, people called him the 'sixth element' of the world that forms the foundation of life in this creation².

And king Atithi was also honoured with the epithet of being the 'eighth mountain' of his race like the other seven great mountains of earth³.

[Note--¹The four Lokpals or caretakers or the guardians of the four corners of the world are (i) Indra, the king of gods and the guardian of the east direction; (ii) Yama, the deity of justice and punishment, is the guardian of the south direction; (iii) Varun, the deity of water and the oceans, is the guardian of the west direction; and (iv) Kubera, the treasurer of heaven, is the guardian of the north direction.

These four Lokpals are responsible for maintaining universal law and order in this world, giving protection to its creatures, and balancing the forces in the cosmos.

From the perspective of the physical world with its kingdoms and its inhabitants, king Atithi was regarded as the fifth Lokpal as he was responsible for the well-being and welfare of everyone without bias.

²The five principle elements of creation are sky, air, fire, water and earth. They form the basic building-blocks of the creation, from its minutest and subtlest form to its most gross

form. Similarly, king Atithi was regarded as fundamental to maintaining law and order in the kingdom and the empire. He was as indispensable in this world as were the other five elements.

³The word 'mountain' is a figure of speech to imply that king Atithi was like a colossus in his race, someone who stood out tall and incomparable amongst all his peers in that era.

A mountain is different from a hill by its sheer size and dimension. There are seven physical mountains in the context of Hindu mythology, and they are the following-Mts. Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Shuktimanta, Riksha, Vindhya, and Paariyaata Parvata.

Like the stature of Mt. Himalayas which also houses Mt. Kailash, the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva, which is much larger and more significant than all these other seven mountain ranges, king Atithi too was honoured as being special amongst all his peers.

According to mythology, the 'seven mountain ranges' are called Kula-Parvatas that define the sacred and geographical landscape of ancient India. These are the following:-

(i) Mahendra--This range is associated with the Eastern Ghats, stretching across the states of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It is associated with the hermitage of sage Parashuram.

(ii) Malaya--This is identified with the southern section of the Western Ghats in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. According to the Matsya Puran, the giant boat of king Manu had anchored here after the great deluge.

(iii) Sahya--This forms the northern and central parts of the Western Ghats; also known as the Sahyadri ranges.

(iv) Suktimat--These are the eastern ranges of central India, known as the Garo-Khasi ranges which are linked to the mountains in the state of Odisha.

(v) Rikshavat--The Satpura ranges that surround central Indian highlands.

(vi) Vindhya--The majestic mountain range that virtually divides the northern and southern halves of India. This range is associated with sage Agastya who had cursed it to remain low so that the path of the sun could be cleared for its annual transit from the south to the north solstice, and vice versa.

(vii) Pariyatra or Paripatra--This represents the western extremities of the Vindhya range. They encompass the Aravalli range in the state of Rajasthan.]

Verse no. 79:

दूरापवर्जितच्छत्रैस्तस्याज्ञान् शासनार्पिताम्।

दधुः शिरोभिर्भूपाला देवाः पौरंदरीमिव॥ १७-७९

dūrāpavarjitacchatraistasyājñān śāsanārpitām |
dadhuḥ śirobhirbhūpālā devāḥ paurāṇdarīmiva|| 17-79

17-79. Just like the gods obey their king Indra, similarly all other rulers obeyed king Atithi by removing their crowns and putting aside their ceremonial umbrellas in his presence to show their respect to him.

Verse no. 80:

ऋत्विजः स तथानर्च दक्षिणाभिर्महाक्रतौ।

यथा साधारणीभूतन् नामास्य धनदस्य च॥ १७-८०

ṛtvijaḥ sa tathānarca dakṣiṇābhirmahākratau |
yathā sādharmaṇībhūtan nāmāsyā dhanadasya ca|| 17-80

17-80. King Atithi gave so much donation and granted such huge largesse to the priests who had participated in his horse-sacrifice and helped successfully complete it that people called Atithi a personified form of Kuber, the lord of wealth in heaven.

[Note--Atithi gave donations and distributed wealth liberally to all the seniors who had helped him in his horse-sacrifice. The gifts were so huge that only a very wealthy and prosperous person with a magnanimous heart, one who has no dearth of wealth and prosperity, would be able to do it. Amongst the pantheon of gods, only Kuber has this ability. So therefore, Atithi was likened to Kuber.]

Verse no. 81:

इन्द्राद्वृष्टिर्नियमितगदोद्रेकवृत्तिर्यमोऽभूत्

यादोनाथः शिवजलपथः कर्मणे नौचराणाम्।

पूर्वापेक्षी तदनु विदधे कोषवृद्धिन् कुबेरः

तस्मिन्दण्डोपनतचरितन् भेजिरे लोकपालाः॥ १७-८१

indrādvṛṣṭirniyamitagadodrekavṛttiryaṃ'o'bhūt
yādonāthaḥ śivajalapathaḥ karmaṇe naucarāṇām |
pūrvāpekṣī tadanu vidadhe koṣavṛddhin kuberaḥ
tasmindaṇḍopanatacaritan bhejire lokapālāḥ|| 17-81

17-81. The four legendary Lokpals¹ were so pleased with king Atithi and his working that Indra (the controller of rain-bearing clouds) showered plenty of rain on the realm ruled by Atithi, Yama (the deity controlling death) stopped spreading of diseases in his realm, Varun (the deity of water) opened water-ways (such as oceans, rivers, streams) for easy navigation and comfort of sailors and ordinary boatmen, and Kuber (the treasurer of heaven) filled the king's treasury with unending wealth.

In this way, the four Lokpals or guardian deities of the four corners of the realm did their best to serve and help king Atithi to carry on with his duties and responsibilities. The king, in his turn, used all the resources at his command to serve society and the subjects of his kingdom well.

[Note--¹Refer: verse no. 78 herein above.]

इति महाकवि कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये सप्तदशः सर्गः॥

iti mahākavi kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye saptadaśaḥ sargaḥ ||

Thus ends the 17th Canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 18, verse nos. 1-53:

Introduction:

This canto primarily lists the names, achievements and salient features associated with the twenty-one kings who succeeded Atithi, the grandson of Lord Ram.

As noted above, this canto is nothing more than a long list of twenty-one kings who followed Atithi, and briefly outlines their special attributes and achievements.

King Atithi's queen was the princess of king Naishadh-raj. From her, Atithi begot an able and strong son whom he named Nishadha (1-niṣadha). Just like the case of people feeling happy to see a good harvest, so likewise king Atithi felt very happy to see his son grow into a valiant prince.

In due course of time, king Atithi, after having spent his life enjoying all the comforts that are available to great emperors, as well as attaining glory and fame, handed over the reins of the kingdom to his son Nishadha and left this mortal world to go to heaven to enjoy all the comforts available to him as a reward of his good deeds and the noble life that he lived.

Atithi's son Nishadha, who had lotus-like eyes, was as majestic and dignified as the ocean, and who had wisdom and seriousness in all his dealings, too enjoyed the fruits of kingdom of a kingdom that extended as far as the ocean.

After Nishadha, the next king was his son named Nala (2-nala). He was as radiant, powerful and glorious as the fire.

Nishadha's son was named Nabha (3-nabha), literally meaning the 'sky', as he had a dark complexion like that of the sky. Nabha was dear to his subjects like the month of Sravan, the rainy season, which is also very dear to and liked by the people because it brings rain. When Nabha attained adulthood, his father Nala handed over the reins of the kingdom, known as 'Uttar Kaushal' with its capital at Ayodhya, to him, and himself he went to the forest to live a life of a hermit amongst forest-dwelling animals. When his father Nala died, the patron deity of the kingdom, known as 'Rajya Laxmi', accepted Nabha as her lord just like goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of wealth and prosperity, had accepted Lord Vishnu as her lord in an ancient time.

Nabha had a son named Pundarik (4-puṇḍarīk). Pundarik had a son named Khemdhanva (5-kṣemadhanvā), who was fully competent to take good care of his subjects, and had a peaceful demeanour. After handing over the reins of the kingdom to his son, Pundarik too went to the forest following in the footsteps of his predecessors who retired to the forest to live like a hermit after handing over the baton of the kingdom to the next generation.

Khemdhanva had a son named Devanik (6- devānik). During his lifetime, Khemdhanva had performed large religious sacrifices, and when he observed that his son Devanik had all the qualities and virtues befitting a great king and was an image of his father, Khemdhanva handed over the responsibilities of the kingdom to his son and went to heaven (i.e. he died). Devanik had such a fine personality and possessed such good qualities and character that both his enemies and friends honoured and respected him equally.

The son of Devanik was called Ahinaag or Ahinagu (7-ahīnagu). He never indulged in sensual pleasures and lived a noble life. He ruled the earth according to the principles of Dharma, and was renowned as a conqueror of enemies.

After Ahinaag's death, his son became the next king. His name was Paariyatra (8-pāriyātra), and he was very brave, strong and powerful. Paariyatra had a son named Sheel (9-śīlaḥ) who was regarded as the best amongst kings of that era.

Sheel's son was named Unnabha (10-unnābha), and the latter's son was called Vajranaabha (11-vajraṇābha) who became an emperor of the earth and the lord of its wealth such diamonds and other precious gems.

Later on, his son was called Shankhan (12-śaṅkhaṇa) who became the next emperor of the earth. He had a son named Vyushi-taa-shwa (13-vyuṣitāśvam), and was so-called because he had a large army with a huge cavalry, and his realm extended to as far as the shores of the ocean. He had established stables for his army's horses on all the shores of the ocean. {Ashwa = horse; Vyshita = one who had large number of horses whom he established in army stables in far away lands.} This king was very powerful, for otherwise such a feat is simply not feasible. In effect, he was like the splendorous sun whose brilliant light spreads over large parts of earth at the same time. He was also very handsome like the Ashwini-kumars.

Vyushitaashwa worshipped Lord Shiva and was blessed with a son named Vishwa-sakha or Vishwashaha (14-viśvasakhaḥ / viśvasah)--the friend of the world. He had a son named Hiranya-naabha (15-hiraṇyanābha), and the latter's son was called Kosala or Kosalya (16-kosalā / kosalya). The king named his son Kosala after the name of his kingdom of Uttar Koshal.

The son of Kosal or Kosalya was named Brahmistha (17-brahmiṣṭha), and the latter's son was named Pushkar-Lochan (18-puṣkarapatranetraḥ), literally meaning one whose eyes are as charming as the petals of a lotus flower.

Pushkar-Lochan's son was Pushya (19-puṣya). Pushya's son was named Dhruvsandhi (20-dhruvasaṁdhi). True to his name, the prince was steady and unwavering like the Polar Star in his resolves, as well as was so powerful and influential that his enemies made peace deals with him.

When king Dhruvsandhi died when he was killed by a lion during a hunting expedition, his son, called Sudarshan (21-sudarśan), was still a child of six years. But he was very talented and quickly learnt the fine art of politics and administration under the guidance of his learned ministers and advisors. In due course of time, Sudarshan became a very powerful king. He was married by his ministers who showed him pictures of beautiful princesses from which he selected his queens.

That said, let us now proceed with reading canto 18 verse-by-verse as follows:-

Verse no. 1:

स नैषधस्यार्थपतेः सुतायाम् उत्पादयामास निषिद्धशत्रुः।
अनूनसारम् निषधान्नगेन्द्रात् पुत्रम् यमाहुर्निषधाख्यमेव॥ १८-१

sa naiṣadhasyārthapateḥ sutāyām utpādayāmāsa niṣiddhaśatruḥ |
anūnasāram niṣadhānnagendrāt putram yamāhurniṣadhākhyameva || 18-1

18-1. King Atithi, who was a conqueror of enemies, married the princess of the king of Naishadha (naiṣadha)¹, and from her he got a son whom he named Nishadha (niṣadha).

[Note--¹The Naishadha kingdom is the hill tract supposed to be situated to the east and south of Mt. Meru. According to modern geography, this kingdom was situated on the Himalayan plateau.]

Verse no. 2:

तेनोनुवीर्येण पिता प्रजायै कल्पिष्यमाणेन ननन्द यूना।
सुवृष्टियोगादिव जीवलोकः सस्येन संपत्तिफलोन्मुखेन॥ १८-२

tenonuvīryeṇa pitā prajāyai kalpiṣyamāṇeṇa nananda yūnā |
suvṛṣṭiyogādiva jīvalokaḥ sasyena saṁpattiphalonmukhena || 18-2

18-2. Just like the case of people feeling happy when they see their harvest mature and crops thrive as a consequence of the rainy season, king Atithi also felt very happy and contented when he saw his growing son who showed all the signs of a future king who would be very powerful and great, someone who would be competent and able to take good care of his subjects and protect them.

Verse no. 3:

शब्दादि निर्विश्य सुखम् चिराय तस्मिन्प्रतिष्ठापितराजशब्दः।
कौमुद्वतेयः कुमुदावदातैः द्यामर्जिताम् कर्मभिरारुरोह॥ १८-३

śabdādi nirviśya sukham cirāya tasminpratiṣṭhāpitarājaśabdah |
kaumudvateyaḥ kumudāvadātaiḥ dyāmarjitām karmabhirāruroha || 18-3

18-3. King Atithi, who was the son of Kumudwati, enjoyed all the comforts and pleasures available to him as a great emperor, along with the great honours and respect shown to him by the world during his lifetime. In due course, he handed over the reins of the kingdom to his competent and able son Nishadha, and himself went to heaven (i.e. died) to enjoy the comforts and pleasures of heaven that were granted to him as a reward for the noble life he had led while ruling over the earth.

[Note--The sort of reward a person enjoys in heaven after leaving this mortal world depends on his Karma, i.e. the deeds that he had done while alive. Since Atithi had led an exemplary life by following the principles of Dharma, so after his death he went to heaven where he was given full honours and shown due respect befitting a noble king.]

Verse no. 4:

पौत्रः कुशस्यापि कुशेशयाक्षः ससागराम् सागरधीरचेताः।
एकातपत्राम् भुवमेकवीरः पुरार्गलादीर्घभुजो बुभोज॥ १८-४

pautraḥ kuśasyāpi kuśeśayākṣaḥ sasāgarām sāgaradhīracetāḥ |
ekātapatrām bhuvamekavīraḥ purārgalādīrghabhujō bubhoja || 18-4

18-4. King Nishadha, the grandson of king Atithi, had lotus-like charming eyes, a mind that was dignified, poised, and had depth (of knowledge and intellect) like the mighty ocean (which too is deep and is a vast reservoir of water)¹, arms that were long and muscular like the wide and strong cross-bars of the city's main gates, and was an unrivalled valiant warrior. He enjoyed the fruits of this earth (i.e. of kingship, such as abundance of wealth, prosperity, fame, honour, respect and goodwill) and ruled over an empire that extended till the shores of the ocean (established by his forefathers).

[Note--¹One remarkable thing about the ocean is that no matter how much water is added to it by rivers that open into it, or by torrential rain from the sky, or taken away from it by way of evaporation during hot weather and the scorching sun, the level of water in the ocean remains the same. Similarly, king Nishadha always remained calm and poised under all circumstances. He neither got agitated, nor became depressed.

Again, like the endless volume of water in the ocean, king Nishadha's patience, fortitude and tolerance knew no bounds. His knowledge was also endless like the water of the ocean. And like the power and ability of the ocean to devour or sink anything without an inch of water level rising, so would the king embrace all sorts of adversities and absorb all kinds of shocks with the greatest of ease. And finally, just like the ocean

that gives shelter to countless marine animals and plants that find the ocean as their abode, so did king Nishadha give shelter to one and all who sought refuge with him.]

Verse no. 5:

तस्यानलौजास्तनयस्तदन्ते वंशश्रियम् प्राप नलाभिधानः।

यो नड्वलानीव गजः परेषाम् बलान्यमृद्गान्नलिनाभवक्त्रः॥ १८-५

tasyānalaujāstanayastadante vaṁśaśriyam prāpa nalābhidhānaḥ |
yo naḍvalānīva gajaḥ pareṣām balānyamṛdgānnalinābhavaktraḥ || 18-5

18-5. After the death of king Nishadha, his son Nala (nala) ascended the throne to become the next king. He was as radiant and glorious as the fire¹; he effortlessly vanquished his enemies and crushed their powers just like the ease with which an elephant tramples upon a bed of reeds and crushes them.

[Note--¹When a fire spreads in a building or a forest, it goes on a rampage, burning everything falling in its path. A man can bear heavy rains, but no one dares to face a raging fire. So likewise, no enemy dared to stand before king Nala out of fear of annihilation.]

Verse no. 6:

नभश्चरैर्गीतयशाः स लेभे नभस्तलश्यामतनुम् तनूजम्।

ख्यातम् नभःशब्दमयेन नाम्ना कान्तम् नभोमासमिव प्रजानाम्॥ १८-६

nabhaścaraigītayaśāḥ sa lebhe nabhastalaśyāmatanum tanūjam |
khyātam nabhaḥśabdamayena nāmnā kāntam nabhomāsamiva prajānām || 18-6

18-6. King Nala was so famous that even the celestial singers of heaven, known as Ghandharvas, used to sing praises in his honour.

He had a son who was of a dark complexion like the colour of the sky. Hence, Nala named his son Nabha (nabha), meaning the 'sky'. Nabha was as dear to his subjects as the month of Sravan (the rainy season) is.

[Note--People welcome and love the rainy season as it brings the life-supporting rains, waters the plains and fields in order to produce a bounty of crops. It fills natural reservoirs of water such as lakes, ponds and wells. It eliminates the heat and scorch of the previous month of summer, rejuvenates life, spreads greenery, replenishes underground water reserves, and gives a fresh impetus to growth and development for the future.

Likewise, the people of the kingdom loved Nabha as he looked after them well, provided for all their needs, protected the kingdom from invaders and enemies, and in general took good care of the kingdom and its citizens.]

Verse no. 7:

तस्मै विसृज्योत्तरकोसलानाम् धर्मोत्तरस्तत्प्रभवे प्रभुत्वम्।
मृगैरजर्यम् जरसोपदिष्टम् अदेहबन्धाय पुनर्बबन्ध ॥ १८-७

tasmai visrjyottarakosalānām dharmottarastatprabhave prabhutvam |
mṛgairajaryam jarasopadiṣṭam adehabandhāya punarbabandha || 18-7

18-7. When the righteous king Nala became old, he handed over the reins of the kingdom of Uttar Kaushal (i.e. Ayodhya) to his son Nabha, and himself went to the forest to spend the rest of his life in seclusion as a hermit (to pursue a spiritual path of meditation, penance and contemplation, a life completely detached from the material world) amongst the animals of the forest so that he may get final deliverance upon death, and free himself from the cycle of re-birth.

Verse no. 8:

तेन द्विपानामिव पुण्डरीको राज्ञामजय्योऽजनि पुण्डरीकः।
शान्ते पितर्याहृतपुण्डरीका यम् पुण्डरीकाक्षमिव श्रिता श्रीः ॥ १८-८

tena dvipānāmiva puṇḍarīko rājñāmajayyo'jani puṇḍarīkaḥ |
śānte pitaryāhṛtapuṇḍarīkā yam puṇḍarīkākṣamiva śritā śrīḥ || 18-8

18-8. King Nabha was blessed with a son named Pundarik (puṇḍarīk). True to his name, Pundarik was regarded as being foremost amongst all the kings of his era just like a famous elephant by the same name who was regarded as the best amongst terrestrial elephants¹.

After his father Nabha went to heaven upon his death, the deity of the kingdom, known as 'Rajya Laxmi', accepted Pundarik as her lord² just like goddess Laxmi (the patron deity of wealth and prosperity) had accepted Lord Vishnu (the second God of the Trinity and the caretaker of this world) as her lord in some ancient time.

[Note--¹The elephant named Pundarik is one of the eight legendary celestial elephants assigned to task of guarding the eight directions of the world. Pundarik elephant guards the south-east direction, a quarter associated with the deity of the fire.

King Nabha named his son 'Pundarik' to invoke the powers of the deity of the fire as well as the elephant associated with this deity so that his son would have the qualities of both the fire god as well as this legendary elephant--i.e. Pundarik would be strong, powerful, glorious, invincible, able to shoulder the burden of a vast empire, create fear amongst his enemies, and gain respect and honour like these two entities, the fire god and the legendary elephant.

By the way, these eight legendary elephants are the following--(i) Airavat, the mount of Indra, guards the eastern direction; (ii) Pundarika guards the south-east and is associated with the fire god. (iii) Vaaman guards the south direction and is associated

with Yama (the god of justice after death); (iv) Kumud guards the south-west and is associated with Nirriti or Nairitya (deity that governs disorder); (v) Anjan guards the west direction and is associated with Varun (deity of water); (vi) Pushpadanta guards the north-west direction and is associated with Vayu (deity of air or wind); (vii) Saarabhauma guards the north and is associated with Kuber (treasurer of heaven); and (viii) Supratika guards the north-east direction and is associated with Ish or Lord Shiva.

²It implies that king Pundarik was blessed with abundance of wealth, prosperity, peace and happiness by the deity of the kingdom.]

Verse no. 9:

स क्षेमधन्वानममोघधन्वा पुत्रम् प्रजाक्षेमविधानदक्षम्।

क्षमाम् लम्भयित्वा क्षमयोपपन्नम् वने तपः क्षान्ततरश्चचार॥ १८-९

sa kṣemadhanvānamamoghadhanvā putram prajākṣemavidhānadakṣam |
kṣmām lambhayitvā kṣamayopapannam vane tapaḥ kṣāntataraścacāra || 18-9

18-9. That successful ruler and an expert archer king Pundarik, in due course of time, transferred his authority to his son Kshemadhanva (kṣemadhanvā), appointing him as the next king of the kingdom. Kshemadhanva was competent enough to look after the welfare of his subjects, and had a calm and peaceful disposition.

After that, as was the tradition in the family, king Pundarik retired to the forest to live a peaceful life of hermit, and do penances.

Verse no. 10:

अनीकिनीनाम् समरेऽग्रयायी तस्यापि देवप्रतिमः सुतोऽभूत्।

व्यश्रूयतानीकपदावसानम् देवादि नाम त्रिदिवेऽपि यस्य॥ १८-१०

anīkinīnām samare'grayāyī tasyāpi devapratimaḥ suto'bhūt |
vyaśrūyatānīkapadāvasānam devādi nāma tridive'pi yasya || 18-10

18-10. King Kshemadhanva had a glorious and able son named Devanik (devānik). The name was very significant--as its first half 'deva' refers to the gods, and the second half 'anik' refers to a brave, courageous and powerful commander of an army. By extension, the word 'anik' also refers to the virtues of valour, strength, courage and bravery, and the combined word 'Devanik' would therefore mean a commander of an army who is as brave, strong and powerful as the commander of the army of gods, a reference to Indra.

Hence, Devanik was like Indra, the king of heaven and the commander of the army of gods. He would lead his army from the front like Indra did, and was as valiant, brave, strong and powerful as Indra. Devanik gained so much glory, fame and prominence during his lifetime that his name became well-known even in heaven amongst the gods.

Verse no. 11:

पिता समाराधनतत्परेण पुत्रेण पुत्री स यथैव तेन।
पुत्रस्तथैवात्मजवत्सलेन स तेन पित्रा पितृमान्बभूव॥ १८-११

pitā samārāadhanatatpareṇa putreṇa putrī sa yathaiva tena |
putrastathaivātmajavatsalena sa tena pitrā pitṛmānbabhūva || 18-11

18-11. King Kshemadhanva became a blessed father to have an obedient and able son Devanik, and similarly Devanik became fortunate to have a loving and caring father like Kshemadhanva.

{Both the father and the son felt blessed and fortunate. A great bond of mutual respect and affection developed between father Kshemadhanva and son Devanik.}

Verse no. 12:

पूर्वस्तयोरात्मसमे चिरोढाम् आत्मोभवे वर्णचतुष्टयस्य।
धुरम् निधायैकनिधिर्गुणानाम् जगाम यज्वा यजमानलोकम्॥ १८-१२

pūrvastayorātmasame ciroḍhām ātmobhave varṇacatuṣṭayasya |
dhuram nidhāyāikanidhirguṇānām jagāma yajvā yajamānalokam || 18-12

18-12. Both the father (Kshemadhanva) and the son (Devanik) were repositories of good virtues and character, and both engaged enthusiastically in performing religious rituals and sacrifices (known as Yagyas).

In due course of time when king Kshemadhanva became old, he handed over the responsibility of taking care of the subjects of his kingdom with all its four classes of people¹ to his son Devanik, who was as able and competent as his father to carry out his obligation fully, and the king himself went to heaven.

{To wit, in old age, the king passed on the baton of governing the kingdom to his able son, and died peacefully.}

[Note--¹The four classes of people in the society can be divided into two categories. The first category are the following: (i) Brahmins--the elderly people who served as teachers, guides, advisors and priests; (ii) Kshatriyas--the warrior class whose job was to give protection to the society and fight enemies; (iii) Vaishayas--the trading people whose functions were related to commerce and generation of wealth; and (iv) Shudras--the people who served other members of the society and freed them from humdrum work of daily life so that they could concentrate their energy and remain focussed on the work assigned to them.

The other category is as follows--(i) Brahmacharya--the first quarter of life when a person studies and acquires skills needed to carry on his duties when adult; the student phase of life; (ii) Grishastha--the householder; the second quarter when a person marries

and raises a family; (iii) Sanyas--the third quarter of life when a person detaches himself from routine worldly affairs and passes on his responsibilities to the next generation; and (iv) Vaanprastha--the fourth and last quarter when the person moves out of home to lead a life of seclusion and peace, doing meditation and penances at a quiet place in some hermitage in the forest, and prepares himself for final exit from this mortal, gross world.

Presently, a king is responsible for good care of all these categories, without discrimination. So, when king Kshemadhanva became old, he handed over the rein of the kingdom to his son Devanik who would now be responsible for taking care of all members of the society in his kingdom.]

Verse no. 13:

वशी सुतस्तस्य वशंवदत्वात् स्वेषामिवासीद्विषतामपीष्टः।

सकृद्विविग्नानपि हि प्रयुक्तम् माधुर्यमीष्टे हरिणान्ग्रहीतुम्॥ १८-१३

vaśī sutastasya vaśamvadatvāt sveṣāmivāsīdviṣatāmapīṣṭaḥ |
sakṛdivivignānapi hi prayuktam mādhyamīṣṭe hariṇāngrahītum || 18-13

18-13. Kshemadhanva's son king Devanik was a very soft-spoken, amiable and polite person, so much so that even his adversaries and enemies showed him the same respect that his friends had for him. The reason is that kindness, sweet words and politeness are welcomed and respected by everyone, and those who may have been inimical earlier become friendly to such a person. Even animals of the forest such as deer lose their fear of a friendly person, and the same animal who would earlier run away at the sight of a man would, when it realises that the man means no harm to it, would come closer and soon become friendly and tamed, enjoying the person's company.

[Note--This verse emphasises the importance of being polite and soft-spoken. A person who uses harsh words is detested by everyone, and a person who is amiable and uses kind words is liked even by his enemy.]

Verse no. 14:

अहीनगुर्नाम स गाम् समग्राम् अहीनबाहुद्रविणः शशास।

यो हीनसंसर्गपराङ्मुखत्वात् युवाप्यनर्थैर्व्यसनैर्विहीनः॥ १८-१४

ahīnagurnāma sa gām samagrām ahīnabāhudraviṇaḥ śaśāsa |
yo hīnasamsargaparāṅmukhatvāt yuvāpyanarthairvyasanairvihīnaḥ || 18-14

18-14. The son of king Devanik was called Ahinagu (ahīnagu). He had very strong arms, and he never kept company with lowly persons. As a result, he never developed any bad traits in himself or got involved in sensual pleasures. Instead, he inculcated noble virtues and good characters, which enabled him to become a righteous and noble ruler of the realm as soon as he attained adulthood.

{Prince Ahinagu or Ahinag developed noble characters and virtues right from his early days, and when he grew up to become an adult prince, he began ruling the kingdom under his father's guidance as the heir-apparent prince. This ensured that by the time his father handed over the full responsibility of the kingdom to him, prince Ahinagu was well-qualified and experienced to step in the shoes of his father effortlessly and seamlessly.}

Verse no. 15:

गुरोः स चानन्तरमन्तरज्यः पुंसाम् पुमानाद्य इवावतीर्णः।

उपक्रमैरस्खलितैश्चतुर्भिः चतुर्दिगीशश्चतुरो बभूव॥ १८-१५

guroḥ sa cānantaramantarajñyaḥ puṁsām pumānādya ivāvatīrṇaḥ |
upakramairaskhalitaiścaturbhiḥ caturdigīśaścaturo babhūva || 18-15

18-15. After the demise of his father, king Devanik, Ahinagu ascended the throne. He was very clever and wise, and had the sixth-sense and the gift of intuitiveness to know what the other person had in his mind.

After ascending the throne, Ahinagu employed all the four cardinal principles of diplomacy, i.e. Saam, Bheda, Daan and Danda¹, as an expediency to soon become a ruler of all the four quarters of the earth like Lord Vishnu (the second God of the Trinity) who rules the entire world.

[Note--¹Refer to Canto 17, verse no. 68 of this book Raghuvansham. These four principles of diplomacy were successfully employed by king Atithi to control his enemies and establish his sovereignty over the whole empire.

Briefly, they are--(i) 'Saam'—conciliation, persuasion, gentlemanly behaviour; politeness, courteousness as well as other diplomatic methods; (ii) 'Daan'—liberal use of largesse, gifts, aids, donations, charity and other material and monetary rewards and help, which morally made the recipient obliged to the king; (iii) 'Danda'—use of punishment, force and other coercive methods; and (iv) 'Bheda'—creating dissension, division, discord, doubts, and exploiting weakness of the opponent.]

Verse no. 16:

तस्मिन्प्रयाते परलोकयात्राम् जेतयरीणाम् तनयम् तदीयम्।

उच्चैःशिरस्त्वाज्जितपारियात्रम् लक्ष्मीः सिषेवे किल पारियात्रम्॥ १८-१६

tasminprayāte paralokayātrām jetaryarīṇām tanayam tadīyam |
uccaiḥśirastvājжитपारियात्रम् lakṣmīḥ siṣeve kila pāriyātram || 18-16

18-16. When king Ahinagu, who was a vanquisher of enemies, died and went to heaven, his able son named Paariyatra (pāriyātra) ascended the throne. He was also as powerful, strong, majestic and famous as his illustrious father. The deity of the kingdom, the

'Rajya-Laxmi', now began to serve him as she had always served the forefathers of the newly appointed king Paariyatra. That means, Paariyatra was blessed with an abundance of wealth, prosperity, peace and happiness like his predecessors.

He had such great character, confidence and dignity that he always held his head high like the high peaks of Mt. Paariyatra¹.

{It might also mean that king Paariyatra, true to his name, brought the high peaks of the mountain bearing his name, i.e. Mt. Paariyatra, under his domain. He extended his sovereignty to the region in and around Mt. Paariyatra.

Further, it also might mean that just like Mt. Paariyatra represents the high peaks in the north-western region of the Vindhya mountain range, king Paariyatra too occupied a position of high respect and majesty in the community of kings of that era. He stood tall and dignified amongst all the kings, and held his head high in the sense that he never bowed or submitted before anyone.

It also implies that he had such an immaculate character and possessed such noble virtues that there was no occasion when he had felt ashamed of himself and had to lower his head in shame.}

[Note--¹Mt. Paariyatra--It is also known as Paripatra. This is an ancient mountain range in Hindu mythology and geography, identified with the north-western section of modern-day Vindhya range in central India. It represents the higher elevations of north-western Vindhya range of mountains.]

Verse no. 17:

तस्याभवत्सूनुरुदारशीलः शिलः शिलापट्टविशालवक्षाः।

जितारिपक्षोऽपि शिलीमुखैर्यः शालीनतामव्रजदीड्यमानः॥ १८-१७

tasyābhavatsūnurunudāraśīlaḥ śīlaḥ śilāpaṭṭaviśālavakṣāḥ |

jitāripakṣo'pi śīlīmukhairyaḥ śālīnatāmaṇvrajadīḍyamānaḥ || 18-17

18-17. Paariyatra begot a son named Sheel (śīlaḥ). True to his name, the son possessed noble characters of being polite, humble, modest and amiable; he had good etiquettes and manners, and was free from ego, haughtiness and arrogance. Sheela had a strong, broad and muscular chest like that of a large slab of stone.

He was an expert archer, and though by the dint of his valour and skills he had vanquished all his enemies by his arrows, yet he felt shy and bashful if anyone praised him for his qualities and accomplishments. {This obviously was because he was modest and humble, and refrained from showing himself off for his virtues and achievements.}

Verse no. 18:

तमात्मसंपन्नमनिन्दितात्मा कृत्वा युवानम् युवराजमेव।

सुखानि सोऽभुङ्क्त सुखोपरोधि वृत्तम् हि राजामुपरुद्धवृत्तम्॥ १८-१८

tamātmasaṁpannamaninditātmā kṛtvā yuvānam yuvarājameva |
sukhāni so'bhuṅkta sukhoparodhi vṛttam hi rājñāmuparuddhavr̥ttam || 18-18

18-18. King Paariyatra, who had an immaculate character, had been so busy with his multifarious duties as a king that he found no time to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of kingdom. Only after he appointed his son Sheela on the throne as the next king later on in life did he find some time to enjoy the fruits of life himself.

Verse no. 19:

तम् रागबन्धिष्ववितृप्तमेव भोगेषु सौभाग्यविशेषभोग्यम्।
विलासिनीनामरतिक्षमाऽपि जरा वृथा मत्सरिणी जहार॥ १८-१९

tam rāgabandhiṣvavitr̥ptameva bhogeṣu saubhāgyaviśeṣabhogyam |
vilāsinīnāmaratikṣamā'pi jarā vṛthā matsariṇī jahāra || 18-19

18-19. Paariyatra was in midst of enjoying the pleasures of life and the company of beautiful women when, almost un-noticed, old age, with its debilitating and decaying effects, came knocking at his door. This old age is such a mysterious phase of life that no person enjoys it, and it also makes a person unfit for enjoying the company of amorous women as well as other things in this world.

[Note--Unlike other phases of life when a person loves to live life to its best, has so many avenues to enjoy life and the world that he may be spoilt for choice, old age snatches every thing and every opportunity for enjoyment from him, and he loathes each single day of life during old age as diseases and a decaying body become a burden and bothersome for him.

Earlier the sight of pretty young women would excite his senses, but in old age he just wants to lie down peacefully and be left to himself. The food and drink that he cherished and longed for earlier, now churn his stomach and torment him.

During this phase, the same man who looked forward at a new day with enthusiasm and zeal for some new achievement in life during his happy adult days earlier, would now count each passing day of old age as a punishment, and would pray to god to end his miseries by letting him die peacefully.]

Verse no. 20:

उन्नाभ इत्युदगतनामधेयः तस्यायथार्थोन्नतनाभिरन्धः।
सुतोऽभवत्पङ्कजनाभकल्पः कृत्स्नस्य नाभिर्नृपमण्डलस्य॥ १८-२०

unnābha ityudgatanāmadheyah tasyāyathārthonnatanaābhirandhraḥ |
suto'bhavatpaṅkajanaābhakalpaḥ kṛtsnasya nābhirnṛpamaṇḍalasya || 18-20

18-20. King Sheela had a famous son named Unnabha (unnābha). His navel was deep, and he had a graceful demeanour like that of Lord Vishnu (the third God of the Trinity). Therefore, he soon became a celebrated leader of all the kings of that era, just like Lord Vishnu is the chief amongst the gods.

{To wit, Unnabha was a Chakravarti king¹. His domain covered a large part of earth in an un-interrupted circle, spreading uniformly in all the directions.}

[Note--Such a king was called 'Chakravarti monarch'. The first part of the word 'Chakravarti' is 'chakra' means a circle or disc, and the second half 'varti' refers to having influence or authority over the area covered by a circle, or one whose presence is felt in all the directions of the realm. A Chakravarti king is like the axle of a wheel, or the focal point or centre of a circle, and the circumference of the circle is like the boundary of his kingdom. Such a monarch is the central authority under whose control and command the rest of the kingdom is governed. It also means that a Chakravarti king is an emperor under whom all other kings live and govern their respective areas like so many supporting circular rings attached to spokes of a wheel for the purpose of strength and stability.

Just like the case of a wheel or a circle, it is the centre or the axis or the axle around which the entire edifice is built, so likewise the centre of authority in an empire is the emperor, and all other kings are subordinates to him and act on his behalf to govern their respective areas.

The comparison with Lord Vishnu is interesting here. Vishnu holds a 'discus', a circular weapon with sharp saw-like circumference, in his hands. He holds this weapon by its axle in the centre, and he is the lord of the world. The major responsibility of Lord Vishnu is taking care of the world, protecting it and providing for its needs. Likewise, being an emperor, a Chakravarti king is also obliged to take good care of his kingdom and subjects, protect them, and provide them with their needs.]

Verse no. 21:

ततः परम् वज्रधरप्रभावः तदात्मजः संयति वज्रघोषः।

बभूव वज्राकरभूषणायाः पतिः पृथिव्याः किल वज्राणभः॥ १८-२१

tataḥ param vajradharaprabhāvaḥ tadātmajaḥ saṁyati vajraghoṣaḥ |
babhūva vajrākarabhūṣaṇāyāḥ patiḥ pṛthivyāḥ kila vajraṇābhaḥ || 18-21

18-21. After Unnabha, his son called Vajranaabha (vajraṇābha) ascended the throne. He became an emperor of the earth and the lord of its wealth such diamonds and other precious gems. Therefore, this king used to adorn himself with a necklace of diamonds. He had influence and authority equivalent to that of Indra, the king of gods and heaven.

During a battle, his war cries resonated like thunder, and his attacks on the enemy were like a strike of Indra's Vajra (a very powerful weapon). {He struck his enemies very hard so much so that they could not escape him and soon capitulated.}

Verse no. 22:

तस्मिन्गते द्याम् सुकृतोपलब्धाम् तत्संभवम् शङ्खणमर्णवान्ता।
उत्खातशत्रुम् वसुधोपतस्थे रत्नोपहारैरुदितैः खनिभ्यः॥ १८-२२

tasmingate dyām sukr̥topalabdhām tatsambhavam śaṅkhaṇamarnāvāntā |
utkhātaśatrum vasudhopatasthe ratnopahāiruditaiḥ khanibhyaḥ || 18-22

18-22. On the strength of his merits, king Vajranaabha attained heaven upon his death. His son was Shankhan (śaṅkhaṇa) who was a destroyer of his enemies, and as such he achieved lordship of the whole earth with its wealth. He gained choicest gifts in the form of precious gems from the mines of earth (like his father Vajranaabha had done).

[Note--Mines of diamonds and other coloured precious stones are found in different parts of India. If we glance at the list where they are found, we come to the obvious conclusion that the sway of these kings extended as far as the places mentioned herein below, from the east to the west, from the north to the south of the Indian sub-continent :--

(a) Diamonds--In the central state of Madhya Pradesh, they are mined primarily in Panna district and its adjoining Chatarpur district; (ii) In the eastern states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, in the mines of Anantapur, Krishna and Kurnool districts; Golconda is an ancient center for diamond trade; (iii) In the states of Chathisgarh, diamonds are mined in Bastar and Vindhya region; (iv) In the state of Maharastra, the area known as Wairagarh is also said to have deposits of diamond-bearing gravel.

(b) Rubies, Sapphires, Aquamarines--The region of Karur in the state of Tamil Nadu is renowned for these precious stones.

(c) Topaz, Garnet, Beryl--They are found in the state of Odissa in its Eastern-Ghats region, in the districts of Kalahandi, Boudh and Koraput.

(d) Rare colour changing stones like Alexandrite and Tourmaline--They are found in the state of Chatisgarh, around Deobhog in the district of Gariyaband.

(e) Blue Sapphires--Found in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in its higher altitude regions of the Zanskar range.

(f) Ruby and Emeralds--(i) Rubies are primarily found in Katni district of Madhya Pradesh state, in Udaipur and Bhindar in Rajasthan state, and in Bir-Mahorajpur belt of the Bolangir district in Odissa state. (ii) Emeralds are found in Rajasthan in a 221 km belt consisting of Rajasmand, Ajmer, Kalagujman, Tikhi and Rajgarh.]

Verse no. 23:

तस्यावसाने हरिदश्वधामा पित्र्यम् प्रपेदे पदमश्विरूपः।
वेलातटेषूषितसैनिकाश्वम् पुराविदो यम् व्युषिताश्वमाहुः॥ १८-२३

tasyāvasāne haridaśvadhāmā pitryam prapede padamaśvirūpaḥ |
velātaṭeṣūṣitasainikāśvam purāvido yam vyuṣitāśvamāhuḥ || 18-23

18-23. After king Shankhan's death, his celebrated son named Vyushi-taa-shwa (vyuṣitāśvam) ascended the throne. He was so-called by elders of the society because he had a large army with a huge cavalry, and his realm extended to as far as the shores of the ocean. He had established stables for his army's horses on all the shores of the ocean. {Ashwa = horse; Vyshita = one who had large number of horses which he established in army stables in far away lands.} This king was very powerful, for otherwise such a feat is simply not feasible.

His majesty and authority spread to far flung areas of earth, just as the brilliant light of the splendorous sun spreads over large parts of earth at the same time. He was also very handsome like the Ashwini-kumars.

[Note--The Ashwini-kumars--They are the twin medicine men of heaven. They are also depicted as twin horsemen. They are the radiant sons of the Sun-God and his consort Sanjana or Sandhya. They are credited with the origin of Ayurveda, the ancient medicine system of India which is based on plants and minerals. They appear just before dawn, heralding a new dawn after the darkness of the night, and symbolising a rejuvenated new life.

In the present verse, king Vyushitaashwa is compared to the sun, and derives his name because of a large brigade of horses in his army, so therefore comparing his handsome personality to Ashwini-kumars is apt, especially because they are the sons of the Sun-God, and are also twin horsemen of heaven.

It is also interesting to note that the word 'ashwa', meaning a horse, is part of both the names, "Ashwa-"ini-kumars and Vyushi-ta"ashwa"]

Verse no. 24:

आराध्य विश्वेश्वरमीश्वरेण तेन क्षितेर्विश्वसहो विजज्ञे।

पातुम् सहो विश्वसखः समग्राम् विश्वंभरामात्मजमूर्तिरात्मा॥ १८-२४

ārādhya viśveśvaramīśvareṇa tena kṣiterviśvasaho vijajñe |
pātum saho viśvasakhaḥ samagrām viśvaṁbharāmātmajamūrtirātmā || 18-24

18-24. King Vyushitaashwa worshipped Lord Kashi Vishwanatha, i.e. Lord Shiva at Varanasi, and by the Lord's grace he begot a son named Vishwa-sakha (viśvasakhaḥ)--literally meaning a friend of the world. {Vishwa = world; Sakha = friend.}

He was also known as Vishwasaha (viśvasah) because he helped and supported the world like a true friend. {Vishwa = world; Saha = to support.}

Because of his friendly attitude, Vishwasakha became very popular in the world. Like his forefathers, he too ruled over the earth as its emperor.

[Note--Since the prince was a blessing of Lord Shiva who is called 'Vishwanaath', the Lord of the world, so therefore he too became the lord of the world. Again, just like Lord Shiva is a friend of the world, the prince too was a friend of the world.

And as we shall read in the next verse, he became invincible for his enemies just like Lord Shiva whom no one can defeat.]

Verse no. 25:

अंशे हिरण्याक्षरिपोः स जाते हिरण्यनाभे तनये नयज्ञः।

द्विषामसहयः सुतराम् तरुणाम् हिरण्यरेता इव सानिलोऽभूत्॥ १८-२५

amśe hiraṇyākṣaripoḥ sa jāte hiraṇyanābhe tanaye nayajñah |
dviṣāmasahyaḥ sutarām tarūṇām hiraṇyaretā iva sānilo'bhūt || 18-25

18-25. King Vishwashakha was a strict follower of rules of law and Dharma in politics and all other spheres of life. He was blessed by a son named Hiranya-naabha (hiraṇyanābha). This son was believed to be a fraction of Lord Vishnu, hence the name¹.

By being blessed with a talented son, king Vishwashakha became unbearable for his enemies who dared not confront him just like the case a raging fire, aided by the wind, becomes unbearable for trees².

[Note--¹Lord Vishnu's another name is Hiranyaaksha as he had slayed a demon by this name. This is why the son had the word 'hiranya' and 'naabha' in his name, where Hiranya stood for Lord Vishnu, and Naabha stood for navel. Just like from Lord Vishnu's navel was born Lord Brahma, the creator of this universe, so likewise was also born prince Hiranyanaabha as a fraction of Lord Vishnu.

²In this analogy, king Vishwashakha is likened to the raging fire, his enemies who could not stand before him to the trees that can't stand before a raging fire, and the wind that helps the fire to spread to the king's blessed son Hiranyanaabha.

Just like the fire which is aided by the wind to spread, likewise king Vishwashakha was aided by his able and talented son Hiranyanaabha to be able to vanquish his enemies and enforce his authority over them.

Though not expressly mentioned, it is quite possible that king Vishwashakha had worshipped Lord Vishnu with a wish to have a son like him, and so when he got a son he named him 'Hiranyanaabha' after Lord Vishnu.]

Verse no. 26:

पिता पितृणामनृणस्तमन्ते वयस्यनन्तानि सुखानि लिप्सुः।

राजानमाजानुविलम्बिबाहुम् कृत्वा कृती वल्कलवान्बभूव॥ १८-२६

pitā pitṛṇāmanṛṇastamante vayasyanantāni sukhāni lipsuḥ |
rājānamājānuvilambibāhum kṛtvā kṛtī valkalavānbabhūva || 18-26

18-26. Later on in his life, when king Vishwashakha had fulfilled his duties and obligations towards his forefathers, enjoyed all the pleasures and comforts that life had to give him, and had installed his son Hiranyanaabha, whose arms stretched upto his knees¹, on the throne of the kingdom, he discarded his royal robes and donned the attire of a hermit, and went to the forest to spend the rest of his life in spiritual pursuit.

[Note--¹In ancient classical texts, a king is depicted to have certain physical features that symbolise his divine mandate to rule, and one such feature is having 'long arms that reach till the knees'. To 'have a long arm' is a figure of speech to imply that the reach of the king's authority, sovereignty and influence extended far beyond the basic boundary of his kingdom, that nothing was inaccessible for him, nothing was hidden from him, and no one could escape him.]

Verse no. 27:

**कौसल्य इत्युत्तरकोसलानाम् पत्युः पतङ्गान्वयभूषणस्य।
तस्यौरसः सोमसुतः सुतोऽभूत् नेत्रोत्सवः सोम इव द्वितीयः॥ १८-२७**

kausalya ittyuttarakosalānām patyuhḥ pataṅgānvayabhūṣaṇasya |
tasyaurasaḥ somasutaḥ suto'bhūt netrotsavaḥ soma iva dvitīyaḥ || 18-27

18-27. King Hiranya-naabha, who was the lord of the kingdom encompassing Uttar Koshal (northern part of the geographical territory known as Kaushal), and was like a jewel of the Solar Race (i.e. the family of kings which traces its roots to the Sun-God), was blessed with a son called Kosala or Kosalya (kosalā / kausalya). {The king named his son Kosala or Kosalya after the name of his kingdom of Uttar Koshal.}

This prince gave joy to the eyes of everyone who looked at him as if he was a second moon. {Just like the full moon grants delight to everyone who see it, the handsome prince, who had a pleasing countenance, gave pleasure to all those who saw him and interacted with him.}

Verse no. 28:

**यशोभिराब्रह्मसभम् प्रकाशः स ब्रह्मभूयम् गतिमाजगाम।
ब्रह्मिष्ठमाधाय निजेऽधिकारे ब्रह्मिष्ठमेव स्वतनुप्रसूतम्॥ १८-२८**

yaśobhirābrahmasabham prakāśaḥ sa brahmabhūyam gatimājagāma |
brahmiṣṭhamādhāya nīje'dhikāre brahmiṣṭhameva svatanuprasūtam || 18-28

18-28. The fame of king Kosal or Kosalya was so great that besides the earth it had even reached the court of Brahma, the creator and the first God of the Trinity in heaven. {Brahma's realm in heaven is called 'Brahma-Loka'.}

During his old age, he handed over the reins of the kingdom to his learned and wise son aptly named Brahmistha (brahmiṣṭha) because he was a very learned prince who became a scholar of metaphysics and spiritualism, bringing him at par with great sages who were enlightened and self-realised, and therefore called 'Brahma-Gyanis'--i.e. those who had true knowledge of Brahm, the Supreme Consciousness.

After having passed on the baton to his son and anointing him on the throne, king Koshal or Kosalya went to the forest to spend his remaining days in spiritual pursuit,

meditation and penance so that he could attain Moksha (deliverance, emancipation and salvation) for himself by being able to merge his soul with the Supreme Soul, and become one with the Supreme Consciousness known as Brahm so that he is finally freed from the cycle of rebirth.

[Note--The son was named after Lord Brahma, the creator of the four Vedas, which are ancient scriptures and a repository of ancient wisdom. The prince named Brahmistha was a scholar of the Vedas, and was well established in spiritual and metaphysical knowledge and wisdom, making him a personified form of Brahma, the creator. It may be possible also that his father wanted his son to be as respected and become as senior amongst all the kings of the earth as Brahma is amongst the gods of heaven.

Further, prince Brahmistha was highly enlightened and self-realised, and he was like the great sages who had true knowledge of Brahm, the Supreme Consciousness.

It is very interesting to note at this juncture that three kings of this dynasty were regarded as being as great as the three great Gods of the Trinity--viz. (i) King Vishwasakha or Vishwasaha was like Lord Shiva because his father had worshipped the Lord to get a son--verse no. 24; (ii) King Hiranya-naabha was like Lord Vishnu--verse no. 25; and (iii) King Brahmistha who was like Lord Brahma--verse no. 28.]

Verse no. 29:

**तस्मिन्कुलापीडनिभे विपीडम् सम्यङ्महीम् शासति शासनाङ्काम्।
प्रजाश्चिरम् सुप्रजसि प्रजेशे ननन्दुरानन्दजलाविलाक्ष्यः॥ १८-२९**

tasminkulāpīḍanibhe vipīḍam samyaṅmahīm śāsati śāsanāṅkām |
prajāścīram suprajasi prajeśe nanandurānandajalāvilākṣyaḥ || 18-29

18-29. The people in the kingdom of king Brahmistha were very good and maintained high standards. The king himself was like a jewel of his ancient family, and was loved by all his subjects. He ruled over the kingdom skilfully and took great care of his subjects so much so that whenever his name was mentioned amongst his people they would have tears of joy out of affection for their king. During his reign, the people lived a happy and comfortable life for a long time.

[Note--True to his name, king Brahmistha loved and took good care of his subjects like the creator Brahma who loves his creation and takes great interest in its welfare.]

Verse no. 30:

**पात्रीकृतात्मा गुरुसेवनेन स्पष्टाकृतिः पत्ररथेन्द्रकेतोः।
तम् पुत्रिणाम् पुष्करपत्रनेत्रः पुत्रः समारोपयदग्रसंख्याम्॥ १८-३०**

pātrīkṛtātmā gurusevanena spaṣṭākṛtiḥ patrarathendraketoḥ |
tam putriṇām puṣkarapatranetraḥ putraḥ samāropayadagrasaṅkhyām ||

18-30

18-30. King Brahmistha had a son who was named Pushkar-Lochan (puṣkarapatranetraḥ), literally meaning one whose eyes are as charming as the petals of a blue lotus flower. This excellent son was so talented and good, as well as so devoted in serving his father that he made his father attain fame as being the best amongst all the fathers who have sons, thereby making his father proud of him.

Prince Pushkar-Lochan had a charming and beautiful countenance like Lord Vishnu, who is also called Kamal-Lochan, or one with blue lotus like eyes, and who holds a flag bearing an image of Garud, the celestial eagle that also happens to be the Lord's mount.

[Note--Since the prince had lotus-like eyes, his father, king Brahmistha, named him Pushkar-Lochan, meaning one with blue lotus like eyes. Incidentally, Lord Vishnu too is called Kamal-Lochan because the Lord's eyes resemble the petals of a lotus flower.

Further, just like Lord Vishnu could go unhindered anywhere he wished on his mount Garud, so would the young prince have the ability to go anywhere on earth unhindered. And just like the case of Lord Vishnu who is the lord of the world and takes good care of it and protects it, so would the prince become a great king and the lord of earth, one who would take good care of it and protect it.]

Verse no. 31:

वंशस्थितिम् वंशकरेण तेन संभाव्य भावी स सखा मघोनः।

उपस्पृशन्स्पर्शनिवृत्तलौल्यः त्रिपुष्करेषु त्रिदशत्वमाप॥ १८-३१

vaṁśasthitim vaṁśakareṇa tena sambhāvya bhāvī sa sakhā maghonaḥ |
upaspr̥śansparśanivṛttalaulyaḥ tripuṣkareṣu tridaśatvamāpa || 18-31

18-31. King Brahmistha led an exemplary life of self-control, abstaining from indulgences in sensual pleasures and enjoyment of material comforts of the gross world. This made him eligible to become a future friend of Indra, the king of heaven, when he died later on in life and went to heaven.

Meanwhile, upon attaining ripe old age, he handed over the rein of the kingdom and the responsibility to continue the good name, glory and prestige of his illustrious family to his equally able son Pushkar-Lochan. After this, the king himself went on a pilgrimage to the holy site known as Tri-Pushkar¹ (tripuṣkareṣu) to do penance and purify himself by bathing in holy lakes before (discarding this mortal gross body and) ascending to heaven to attain final Mukti (freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death).

[Note--¹The Tripushkar is a famous pilgrim site, commonly known simply as 'Pushkar' after the Sanskrit word for lotus, located in the state of Rajasthan near the city of Ajmer. This holy place is a complex of three holy lakes, hence the suffix 'tri', meaning 'three', in its name. It was formed when three petals of Brahma's lotus fell on the ground at three

places during his battle to slay a demon named Vajranaabha. These three petals formed the three holy lakes--Jeystha (Great or Main) where the first petal fell, Madhya (Middle or Central) where the second petal fell, and Kanistha (Small or Youngest), also known as Budha Pushkar, where the third petal fell. Each of these three lakes was assigned a presiding deity, Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva respectively.

These holy lakes are all located about 10-14 km from the city of Ajmer on the other side of the Aravalli range of mountains. It is believed that since all the three deities of the Trinity of Gods, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, have their holy presence at one single location, doing penance here and taking a bath in all these three lakes helps a person to repent for his sins, purify himself, and go to heaven. This single location grants a pilgrim the same benefits that he gets by bathing at three different holy pilgrim sites such as Haridwar in the north, Varanasi in the central part of the Indian sub-continent, and Rameshwaram in the south.

The main lake, known as the Jeystha (Great or Main), is in the town of Pushkar itself, and nearby is the temple of Lord Brahma. This is the only place where Brahma is worshipped. The other two lakes are located within a radius of 5-6 km from the main town of Pushkar, spread in the valley of the Aravalli mountain range.

The complex of Tri-Pushkar is regarded as Tirtha Raaj, i.e. the king amongst all holy places.

In the context of this verse, king Brahmistha went to this pilgrim site to do penance and take a bath in all the three holy lakes before ascending to heaven where he became a friend of Indra.]

Verse no. 32:

तस्य प्रभानिर्जितपुष्परागम् पौष्याम् तिथौ पुष्यमसूत पत्नी।
तस्मिन्नपुष्यन्नुदिते समग्राम् पुष्टिम् जनाः पुष्य इव द्वितीये॥ १८-३२

tasya prabhānirjitapuṣparāgam pauṣyām tithau puṣyamasūta patnī |
tasminnapuṣyannudite samagrām puṣṭim janāḥ puṣya iva dvitīye || 18-32

18-32. King Pushkar-Lochan begot a son from his wife (puṣyamasūta patnī). The son was born on a full moon's night of the Hindu month of Paushya¹.

The king named his son Pushya (puṣya) after the name of the month in which he was born as well as the auspicious Nakshatra (asterism; a group of stars) of the same name.

The prince had a glowing halo that was more magnificent than that of the gem known as Padma-raag Mani². His birth was regarded as being very auspicious because when he was born, the subjects of the kingdom were blessed with an abundance of wealth and all-round prosperity. Therefore, prince Pushya was regarded as a personified form of the auspicious Nakshatra known as Pushya, i.e. as a second Pushya (puṣya iva dvitīye).

{To wit, while the first Pushya Nakshatra was in the heavens (sky), its representative was prince Puhy on earth. So in effect, the prince was a de-facto second Pushya Nakshatra.}

[Note--¹The Paushya month of the Hindu calendar is roughly between the middle of December to middle of January. As with all the months, there was a full moon night during this month too, and it is called 'Purnima'. The prince was born during one such full moon night in the auspicious Pushya Nakshatra (asterism; a group of stars). According to ancient Hindu astrology, a child's future is governed according to the Nakshatra prevailing at the time of its birth. Since prince Pushya was born under an auspicious Nakshatra on a full moon's night, he was regarded as being blessed with a brilliant future.

²The Padma-raag Mani is a jewel of the colour of pollen of the lotus flower. The word 'Padma' refers to the lotus flower, 'Raag' refers to both the pollen as well as the colour of the flower, and 'Mani' means a gem or precious stone. It refers to a blue Sapphire or a red Ruby, corresponding to a blue or pink lotus flower respectively. The colour of the lotus is visible, but since the pollen grains contain the genes that produce another flower in the likeness of the parent flower, it is deemed that the colour of the pollen would be the same as the colour of the flower.]

Verse no. 33:

**महीम् महच्छः परिकीर्य सूनौ मनीषिणे जैमिनयेऽर्पितात्मा।
तस्मात्सयोगादधिगम्य योगम् अजन्मनेऽकल्पत जन्मभीरुः॥ १८-३३**

mahīm mahecchah parikīrya sūnau manīṣiṇe jaiminaye'rpitātmā |
tasmātsayogādadhigamya yogam ajanmane'kalpata janmabhīruḥ || 18-33

18-33. King Pankaj-Lochan was a very generous and gracious person with a magnanimous and charitable disposition. He wished not to take a birth again in this mortal, gross world, i.e. he wanted to attain Moksha (final deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the soul).

With this view, he appointed his able son Pushya on the throne of the kingdom as the next ruler, and himself became a disciple of the great sage Jaimini¹ from whom the king learnt Yoga (meditation). By faithfully following his teacher's advice, and by practicing Yoga, the king attained freedom from the cycle of re-birth (i.e. he attained Moksha).

[Note--¹Sage Jaimini: He was the son of sage Parashar, and a great and renowned scholar of the Sama Veda. He was a disciple of the great sage Veda Vyas. He is the founder of the Mimamsa school of Hindu philosophy. He wrote the fundamental texts on Vedic interpretation, ethics and astrology. He lived between the 4th and the 2nd century BCE, but some scholars assign the period of 250-50 BCE as the period when he lived. The former period seems to be more appropriate because one of his writings, Jaimini Bharat, was based on the epic Mahabharat that narrated the great war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and related to the period of Lord Krishna earlier on in history.

Since Jaimini relied on the Mahabharat to compose his own narration in the 'Jaimini Bharat', it follows that surely the sage must have lived during a period after the Mahabharat was written. And since it is believed that though the great epic story of the

Mahabharat was composed over a long period of time, but its primary form was written between the 8th and the 4th century B.C., it follows that the period between the 4th and the 2nd century B.C. is the most appropriate time frame when sage Jaimini lived.

The book 'Jaimini Bharat' was based on the Ashwamedha Parva of the Mahabharat. The question why he zoomed in on a particular section or chapter of a huge book and worked on it in detail, the answer is that when sage Jaimini decided to emphasise that one can attain freedom from the cycle of birth and death, and attain deliverance for his soul by following the advice of the Vedas and doing rituals (Karma Kand) as well as living an ethical and conscientious life of righteousness and goodness of intent, conduct and thought (Dharma Kand) as prescribed by Vedic texts, he thought it best to cite an example to drive home the truth of his point. And towards this end there was no better choice before him than the Mahabharat which was a well known and respected historical story of a great race consisting of the Kurus and the Pandavas. To remain focused on his main objective, he zoomed in on the Ashwamedha Parva because he wanted to cite a historical event of the eldest of the Pandava brothers, Dharma-raj Yudhisthir, who had performed the horse sacrifice to seek redemption for the sins of the Mahabharat War, as well as to establish a peaceful and righteous kingdom. This story also emphasises the virtues of Bhakti, or devotion, to highlight the practical way of employing Vedic rituals and philosophy in one's life to achieve peace and righteousness. It also emphasises that a person can attain emancipation and salvation even while remaining engaged in the affairs of life in this world, but being mindful of the way he lives his life. Yudhisthir performed a horse sacrifice, he did not go to the forest to become a hermit, and yet he was able to redeem himself and atone for his sins of the war. Jaimini's intention was to set an example for other kings and ordinary householders that attaining liberation and deliverance is possible for everyone if one follows the advice of the scriptures.

Although Jaimini was a Vedic scholar stressing on Karma and Dharma Kandas (righteous activities and ethical deeds to fulfil one's obligations and responsibilities), yet in 'Jaimini Bharat' he had also emphasised on the importance of Bhakti (devotion) by citing Yudhisthir's case who practiced devotion for Lord Krishna. Bhakti, he highlighted, is the practical way of employing Vedic rituals and philosophy in one's life to achieve spiritual peace and happiness, that in turn inspires a person to follow the path of righteousness and ethics.

Besides the 'Jaimini Bharat', sage Jaimini's other great treatise was his magnum opus known as the 'Mimansa Sutas'. It deals with performance of Vedic rituals (Karma Kanda), and ethical duties (Dharma based on Vedic concepts) as a path to righteousness, as opposed to mystical practices. He approached the complex Vedic texts in a systematic manner, so much so that his writings enable Vedic texts to be easily understood and analysed today.

Jaimini believed in Karma Kand and Dharma Kand as a path to attain final deliverance from this mortal, gross world, which was quite a different path compared to mysticism.

He is also called the forefather of Hindu astrology, for he wrote another treatise known as 'Jaimini Sutra' dealing with Vedic astrology. He placed a great emphasis on the various aspects of the zodiac signs rather than just the planets.]

Verse no. 34:

ततः परम् तत्प्रभवः प्रपेदे ध्रुवोपमेयो ध्रुवसंधिरुर्वीम्।
यस्मिन्नभूज्ज्यायसि सत्यसंधे संधिर्ध्रुवः संनमतामरीणाम्॥ १८-३४

tataḥ param tatprabhavaḥ prapede dhruvopameyo dhruvasaṁdhirurvīm |
yasminnabhūjjyāyasi satyasaṁdhe saṁdhirdhruvaḥ saṁnamatāmarīṇām || 18-34

18-34. King Pushya had a son named Dhruvsandhi (dhruvasaṁdhi). True to his name, the prince was steady and unwavering like the Polar Star in his resolves, as well as was so powerful and influential that his enemies made peace deals with him. The treaty of peace and friendship that he made with his enemies was an inviolable document as he never went back on his words, and expected that the other person also lived upto his obligations in upholding the validity and sanctity of the peace treaty in letter and spirit.

In due course of time, Dhruvsandhi became the king after his father Pushya.

[Note--The word 'Dhruvsandhi' has two parts--viz. 'Dhruv' = the Polar Star that never changes its position in the sky; and 'Sandhi' = to make a peace with.]

Verse no. 35:

सुते शिशावेव सुदर्शनाख्ये दर्शात्ययेन्दुप्रियदर्शने सः।
मृगायताक्षो मृगायाविहारी सिंहादवापद्विपदम् नृसिंहः॥ १८-३५

sute śiśāveva sudarśanākhye darśātyayendupriyadarśane saḥ |
mṛgāyatākṣo mṛgayāvihārī simhādavāpadvipadam nṛsimhaḥ || 18-35

19-35. King Dhruvsandhi had eyes like those of deer (i.e. large and beautiful), and he was like a lion amongst men. One day, while on a hunting expedition in the forest, he was killed by a lion. At that time, his son, a prince named Sudarshan (sudarśan), was still a child. He was as charming as the moon of the second night after the dark fortnight.

[Note--There are two significant analogies here. One is the reference to the 'dark fortnight'--when king Dhruvsindhi died, it plunged the kingdom in a dark phase of uncertainties and despair because at that point of time the prince was a child and the throne fell vacant.

The other reference is to the 'moon of the second night after the dark fortnight'. This moon increases in shape and shine with the passage of each day of the bright fortnight. This means that the prince, Sudarshan, grew gradually with each passing day, month and year to finally attain adulthood and become as prominent, handsome and majestic as the full moon is in the sky when it reaches the climax of its brilliance on the full moon night.]

Verse no. 36:

स्वर्गामिनस्तस्य तमैकमत्यात् अमात्यवर्गः कुलतन्तुमेकम्।
अनाथदीनाः प्रकृतीरवेक्ष्य साकेतनाथम् विधिवच्चकार॥ १८-३६

svargāminastasya tamaikamatyāt amātyavargaḥ kulatantumekam |
anāthadīnāḥ prakṛtīravekṣya sāketanātham vidhivaccakāra || 18-36

18-36. When the ministers saw that the throne had fallen vacant upon the death of the king (Dhruvsandhi), and the subjects were feeling restless and tense about their future, they decided unanimously to anoint prince Sudarshan as the next king of the kingdom by following regular protocols for such appointments.

{A coronation ceremony was organised where priests recited Vedic hymns and poured consecrated holy water on Sudarshan's head as part of the ritual of anointment of a new king. A royal proclamation was made to the effect that prince Sudarshan would henceforth be called a 'king'.}

Verse no. 37:

नवेन्दुना तन्नभसोपमेयम् शबैकसिंहेन च काननेन।
रघोः कुलम् कुट्मलपुष्करेण तोयेन चाप्रौढनरेन्द्रमासीत्॥ १८-३७

navendunā tannabhasopameyam śābaikasimhena ca kānanena |
raghoḥ kulam kuṭmalapuṣkareṇa toyena cāpraudhanarendramāsīt || 18-37

18-37. With king Sudarshan's ascendance to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya, this ancient and illustrious family (dynasty) of the celebrated king Raghu, known as the 'Raghu-kul', retained and reinforced its glory, majesty and prominence on earth just like the moon of the second night after the dark fortnight looks attractive in the night sky and makes the dark background of the sky appear beautiful by its presence, a lion's cub looks charming in the forest as it plays around, making the forest feel proud to have such a charming and harmless young creature playing on its ground, and a new lotus flower looks not only beautiful itself in the pond or the lake where it grows but it also shares its charm and beauty with the pond or the lake.

[Note--The moon of the second night after the dark fortnight is a comparatively bright object in the otherwise dark firmament. And with each passing day, the moon increases in size and brightness, giving light to the sky around it. So the sky feels privileged and happy to be an abode of the moon.

The lion is surely a fearsome animal, but its cub is a pretty and harmless little creature who frolics around amongst trees in a forest. So while the lion may create fear, but its cub adds charm to the forest.

A pond or a lake may have dirty water, but the lotus remains beautiful and free from dirt as it stands above the surface of the water. This makes a water body with lots of lotuses in it look very beautiful and attractive inspite of its not-so-clean water.]

Verse no. 38:

लोकेन भावी पितुरेव तुल्यः संभावितो मौलिपरिग्रहात्सः।
दृष्टो हि वृण्वन्कलभप्रमाणो अप्याशाः पुरोवातमवाप्य मेघः॥ १८-३८

lokena bhāvī pitureva tulyaḥ sambhāvito mauliparigrahātsaḥ |
dr̥ṣṭo hi vṛṇvankalabhapramāṇo apyāśāḥ purovātamavāpya meghaḥ || 18-38

18-38. When the young prince Sudarshan wore the crown of the kingdom on his head and was declared a king, by his general demeanours and dignified appearance the subjects of the kingdom deduced that he would evolve into a great king of the royal lineage like his father, though at present he was very young. It was like the case of a young calf of an elephant who would one day grow to become as majestic an elephant as its father. Or, it was like the case of a small cloud that eventually develops into a large one and spreads across the sky when aided and supported by the wind.

[Note--The idea here is that though Sudarshan was still too young to ascend the throne and don the crown of a great king that entailed carrying the burden of myriad royal responsibilities on his head, yet the people were convinced that he had the talent and the will and the acumen to learn fast and gain quick hands-on experience, aided and supported by loyal and able ministers, to step into the shoes of his forefathers and hold the flag of their glorious legacy high.

The example of the elephant's calf is very apt here. The young animal learns from its parents; it does not go to any school to learn the necessary skills which it would need when it grows to become an adult elephant. These skills, survival instincts and relevant behavioural patterns befitting an elephant come naturally to the calf. It's in the young calf's genes. Like the elephant's calf, prince Sudarshan too had acquired the genes of a great king from his illustrious father, and as such he already had the necessary foundation laid for him that would make him talented and possess a natural acumen to grasp the finer points of administration, politics and other kinds of royal responsibilities and etiquettes that entitled him to become a great monarch in the likeness of his father and other forefathers of the dynasty.

Similarly, just like the wind helps a small patch of cloud to spread over the sky, the faithful ministers of Sudarshan helped him to gain hands-on knowledge of administration of this vast kingdom, and prepare him to take on the full responsibility of the kingdom independently in due course of time so that one day his glory would spread across the length and breadth of the kingdom.]

Verse no. 39:

तम् राजवीथ्यामधिहस्ति यातम् आधोरणालम्बितमग्र्यवेशम्।
षड्वर्षदेशीयमपि प्रभुत्वात् प्रैक्षन्त पौराः पितृगौरवेण॥ १८-३९

tam rājavīthyāmadhihasti yātam ādhoraṇālambitamagryaveśam |
ṣaḍvarṣadeśīyamapi prabhutvāt praiṣanta pauraḥ pitṛgauraveṇa || 18-39

18-39. At the time of ascending the throne, Sudarshan was merely six years old. So therefore, when the young king mounted an elephant and went out on a tour of the city through its main street, called the 'Raj-Marga', the avenue of the king, the elephant tamer who drove his royal elephant would hold his royal robes from its corners to guard the young king from falling down. During those times, though Sudarshan was still a child, yet the subjects treated him with the same honour, dignity and respect with which they had treated the young prince's father, the late king Dhruvsandhi.

[Note--This is because of the crown on the young Sudarshan's head. The subjects paid their respect to the 'crown' more than the individual with the name of Sudarshan. All administrative functions were carried on by the ministers, obviously because a six year old boy cannot handle such things. But all such functions carried the royal seal and bore the authority of the crown, and for all practical purposes it did not matter which individual had issued a particular order.]

Verse no. 40:

कामम् न सोऽकल्पत पैतृकस्य सिंहासनस्य प्रतिपूरणाय।
तेजोमहिम्ना पुनरावृतात्मा तद्व्याप चामीकरपिञ्जरेण॥ १८-४०

kāmam na so'kalpata paitṛkasya simhāsanasya pratipūraṇāya |
tejomahimnā punarāvṛtātmā tadvyāpa cāmīkarapiñjareṇa || 18-40

18-40. Since Sudarshan was still a young boy of six years, so when he sat on the throne of his father, he appeared very undersized and was dwarfed with respect to the big size of the royal throne, and he would only occupy a small area of the seat of the throne. did not fill the full area of the seat of the throne. But he sat on the throne with such dignity and self-confidence, as well as with an aura of royalty and authority that these virtues, befitting a king, radiated out from him like a subtle glow which covered the vacant space on the throne around him, compensating for an adult king's muscular body.

Verse no. 41:

तस्मादधः किञ्चिदिवावतीर्णौ संस्पृशन्तौ तपनीयपीठम्।
सालक्तकौ भूपतयः प्रसिद्धैः ववन्दिरे मौलिभिरस्य पादौ॥ १८-४१

tas mādadhaḥ kimcidivāvatīrṇau saṁsprśantau tapanīyapīṭham |
sālaktakau bhūpatayaḥ prasiddhaiḥ vavandire maulibhirasya pādu || 18-41

18-41. When Sudarshan sat on the throne, his legs would dangle from the high seat because they fell short of the footstool placed in front of the throne. This footstool was used by kings to rest their legs when they sat on the throne.

In spite of this oddity, when the junior kings of the realm (the vassals and subordinate kings of the empire) came to meet Sudarshan to pay their respects to the newly appointed emperor, they touched his dangling feet with their heads and crowns as a mark of accepting the emperor's supremacy over them.

[Note--All the kings of the Raghu dynasty were kings as well as emperors as their influence extended much beyond the physical boundaries of their kingdom known as Uttar Koshal, with its capital at Ayodhya. Nearly all of them had gone on a campaign of Digvijay to reiterate their authority and reassert their sovereignty over a large part of the Indian sub-continent which formed their empire. The realm of the empire went much beyond the geographical limits of the kingdom of Ayodhya itself, and included all those kingdoms or territories which the king had conquered or subdued during his Digvijay campaign. When a new king ascended the throne of Ayodhya, all the junior or subordinate kings, or the governors of the extended jurisdiction of the kingdom itself, would come with gifts to pay their respects to the king-cum-emperor, and to get acquainted with their new sovereign.]

Verse no. 42:

मणौ महानील इति प्रभावात् अल्पप्रमाणेऽपि यथा न मिथ्या।

शब्दो महाराज इति प्रतीतः तथैव तस्मिन्युयुजेऽर्भकेऽपि॥ १८-४२

maṇau mahānīla iti prabhāvāt alpapramāṇe'pi yathā na mithyā |
śabdo mahārāja iti pratītaḥ tathaiva tasminyuyuje'r bhake'pi || 18-42

18-42. Just like the case of a rare piece gem known as the 'blue sapphire' having a great intrinsic value and honoured with the epithet of 'Maha-Neel' (maṇau mahānīla), though the gem itself may be of a small size, so likewise the title 'Maharaja', meaning a great king (mahārāja) fitted the young prince Sudarshan well even though he was a young boy at the time he ascended the throne.

{This implies that prince Sudarshan, now a king though he was still a young lad of a diminutive height, possessed certain noble qualities and virtuous traits that made him stand out tall in the community of kings.}

Verse no. 43:

पर्यन्तसंचारितचामरस्य कपोललोलोभयकाकपक्षात्।

तस्याननादुच्चरितो विवादः चचाल वेलास्वपि नार्णवानाम्॥ १८-४३

pariyantasaṁcāritacāmarasya kapolalolobhayakākapakṣāt |
tasyānanāduccarito vivādaḥ cacāla velāsvapi nārṇavānām || 18-43

18-43. The young king Sudarshan was fanned by whisks on his either sides when he sat on the throne as was the tradition with kings. Locks of long curly hairs would dangle on his cheeks (and sway when he moved his head).

Even though he was a young boy, but whenever he issued an order as a king, it was obeyed even in the far-flung areas of the realm, as far as the shores of the ocean, and so there was no wonder if his orders were also obeyed by those who lived nearby.

[Note--If people living far away obeyed him though they were relatively secured by the great distance between their native places of residence and the headquarter of the empire at Ayodhya, which would make it quite difficult for the new king to enforce his orders, so there is no wonder that people living in nearby areas would obey the young king's orders as it would be easier for the king to send his men to enforce obedience and punish those who disobeyed him.]

Verse no. 44:

निर्वृत्तजाम्बूनदपट्टशोभे न्यस्तम् ललाटे तिलकम् दधानः।

तेनैव शून्यान्यरिसुन्दरीणाम् मुखानि स स्मेरमुखश्चकार॥ १८-४४

nirvṛttajāmbūnadapaṭṭaśobhe nyastam lalāṭe tilakam dadhānaḥ |
tenaiva śūnyānyarisundarīṇām mukhāni sa smeramukhaścakāra || 18-44

18-44. King Sudarshan, who wore a golden band around his head (to bind his long curly hairs and keep them in order), used to apply the Tilak Mark on his forehead himself. His countenance was always cheerful and pleasing to behold¹.

As time passed and he became an adult king, Sudarshan would defeat and slay his enemies in the battle-field, thereby depriving their wives of these two symbols of happiness that he himself cherished to display on his body, i.e. the Tilak Mark on a married woman's forehead, as well as the smile on their faces².

[Note--¹The Tilak Mark is an auspicious mark and a symbol of authority for a king, and it also implies moral and religious authority of the person who bears this mark on his forehead. It consists of a paste made from powdered sandalwood, saffron and other aromatic herbs along with vermilion, turmeric and other chemicals mixed with a fragrant oil.

²When an opposing king was defeated or killed in battle with Sudarshan, the wife of the defeated or killed king would plunge in gloom. This robbed the smile on her face, and she would also remove the Tilak Mark from her forehead because according to Hindu tradition a widow is not supposed to bear this mark.

The comparison is so stark. A person may like something himself and take pride in possessing it, but the same person has no qualms or regret when another person is deprived of it because of him.]

Verse no. 45:

शिरीषपुष्पाधिकसौकुमार्यः खेदम् न यायादपि भूषणेन।
नितान्तगुर्वीमपि सोऽनुभावात् धुरम् धरित्र्या बिभरांबभूव॥ १८-४५

śirīṣapuṣpādhikasaukumāryaḥ khedam na yāyādapi bhūṣaṇena |
nitāntagurvīmapi so'nubhāvāt dhuram dharitryā bibharāmbabhūva || 18-45

18-45. King Sudarshan had a very tender body like the petals of the Sirisha flower¹. That is why he found it painful and burdensome even to wear his royal ornaments, robes and other paraphernalia.

But inspite of the tenderness and delicate nature of his physical body, king Sudarshan was blessed with great confidence, will-power, and a deep sense of responsibility that he easily and comfortably bore the burden of the administration of the earth, i.e. his kingdom, and taking good care of it and his subjects, with dignity and aplomb.

[Note--¹The Sirisha flower blooms on a tree with the same name. It is also commonly known as the Woman's Tongue tree. Its scientific name is Albizia lebbeck. Its other names are Indian Siris, Frywood, Lebbeck tree, and Koko. It is a fast growing tropical deciduous tree which is highly valued for its fragrant flowers which are soft and creamy in texture, and have a yellow-white colour.]

Verse no. 46:

न्यस्ताक्षरामक्षरभूमिकायाम् कात्स्न्येन गृह्णाति लिपिम् न यावद्।
सर्वाणि तावच्छ्रुतवृद्धयोगात् फलान्युपायुङ्क्त स दण्डनीतेः॥ १८-४६

nyastākṣarāmakṣarabhūmikāyām kārtsnyena grhṇāti lipim na yāvad |
sarvāṇi tāvacchrutavṛddhayogāt phalānyupāyauṅkta sa daṇḍanīteḥ || 18-46

18-46. Even though he was so young that he could not write properly on a slate, yet he had the natural ability and the instinct to quickly learn and master all the intricacies of laws of politics and diplomacy, as well as jurisprudence and administration of justice by the virtue of his company and interaction with his trusted and skilled ministers and advisors.

[Note--Though king Sudarshan missed the opportunity of having formal education and training like other princes of his age because his father had died when he was merely six years old, and the kingdom's ministers installed the child prince on the throne to prevent it from remaining vacant, yet he was so intelligent and bestowed with natural talent that he could learn fast from his day-to-day hands-on experience of administrative affairs of the kingdom, and oral discussions with his ministers. Once he heard something, he would not forget it; he diligently paid attention to even small things and took active role in the affairs of the kingdom. Though a young boy, he behaved like a mature adult.]

Verse no. 47:

उरस्यपर्याप्तनिवेशभागा प्रौढीभविष्यन्तमुदीक्षमाणा।

संजातलज्जेव तमालपत्र च्छायाछलेनोपजुगूह लक्ष्मीः॥ १८-४७

urasyaparyāptaniveśabhāgā prauḍhībhaṣīyantaṁudīkṣamāṇā |
saṁjātalajjeva tamālapatra cchāyāchalenopajugūha lakṣmīḥ || 18-47

18-47. The Rajya-Laxmi, the deity of the kingdom who presided over the kingdom's wealth, prosperity and future, waited for the time being from embracing Sudarshan as her lord because he was still too young for the honour; she waited for the time when Sudarshan would attain adulthood.

But since she knew that the young prince was destined to become a full-fledged king and lord of the kingdom as soon as he attained adulthood, she always followed and supported him secretly, often in the form of the shadow of the royal canopy or umbrella that was spread over young Sudarshan's head when he sat on the throne.

[Note--Ancient tradition and folklore hold that the Rajya-Laxmi treats the king as her de-facto husband. A king had two wives--one was his queen, and the other was the deity of the kingdom, the Rajya-Laxmi. Both of them served their lord, the king, in equal measure and in the sphere of activity assigned to them. While the queen served and took care of his physical needs, the Rajya-Laxmi ensured that his kingdom remains happy, wealthy and prosperous.

The Rajya-Laxmi in this case felt shy to openly declare Sudarshan as her de-facto husband because he had not attained a marriageable age as yet.]

Verse no. 48:

अनश्नुवानेन युगोपमानम् अबद्धमौर्वीकिणलाञ्छनेन।

अस्पृष्टखड्गत्सरुणापि चासीत् रक्षावती तस्य भुजेन भूमिः॥ १८-४८

anaśnuvānena yugopamānam abaddhamaurvīkiṇalāñchanena |
asprṣṭakhaḍgatsaruṇāpi cāsīt rakṣāvatī tasya bhujena bhūmiḥ || 18-48

18-48. Even though the young king Sudarshan yet did not have long and sturdy arms like a yoke or the crossbar of a chariot, arms that had not yet become muscular by pulling the strings of a bow, and his palms were too small to hold the hilt of a sword, yet he was so skilled and confident, and had a natural aptitude, the ability and the intelligence to govern like a mature king, that he could use his arms (i.e. his position as a king, as well as the authority granted to him by the virtue of the crown on his head) to be able to take good care of the earth in his realm, i.e. his kingdom and its subjects.

[Note--The phrase 'use of his arms' is a figure of speech which refers to the ability of a king to enforce his orders by use of force. Sudarshan did not actually use his physical

arms to do anything, such as to fight or drive a chariot, because he was too young for such activities. But the authority that he wielded because of the crown on his head was equivalent to a king enforcing his orders by the use of the strength of his arm. So therefore, young Sudarshan exercised his powers well to put them in good use for the benefit of kingdom and its subject.]

Verse no. 49:

**न केवलम् गच्छति तस्य काले ययुः शरीरावयवा विवृद्धिम्।
वंश्या गुणाः खल्वपि लोककान्ताः प्रारम्भसूक्ष्माः प्रथिमानमापुः॥ १८-४९**

na kevalam gacchati tasya kāle yayuḥ śarīrāvayavā vivṛddhim |
vaṁśyā guṇāḥ khalvapi lokakāntāḥ prārambhasūkṣmāḥ prathimānamāpuḥ || 18-49

18-49. As time passed, king Sudarshan attained adulthood. His body developed and became muscular. The traits and virtues for which his family was renowned too were enhanced and became more robust. {His personality became prominent and imposing, and his presence acquired an aura of dominance, majesty and glory like that of his ancestors.}

Verse no. 50:

**स पूर्वजन्मान्तरदृष्टपाराः स्मरन्निवाक्लेशकरो गुरुणाम्।
तिस्रस्त्रिवर्गाधिगमस्य मूलम् जग्राह विद्याः प्रकृतीश्च पित्र्याः॥ १८-५०**

sa pūrvajanmāntaradr̥ṣṭapārāḥ smarannivākleshakaro gurūṇām |
tisrastrivargādhigamasya mūlam jagrāha vidyāḥ prakṛtīśca pitryāḥ || 18-50

18-50. King Sudarshan learnt the intricacies of the three principles that help a man to lead a fruitful life, as well as the three principles of political science and administration with which a king is able to maintain control over his kingdom as well as rein in his enemies and adversaries.

From the way he quickly learnt and expertly grasped these basic principles by having mere oral discussion with his ministers and advisors, who acted like teachers for him, king Sudarshan gave the impression that he had studied them thoroughly in his previous life and simply brought that knowledge with him in his present life.

By his pleasant demeanours and compassionate way of dealing with his subjects, king Sudarshan gained their affection and respect just like his forefathers had got.

The three principles that enable a man to lead a fruitful life are Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality in all spheres of life's activities), Artha (creation of wealth and prosperity), and Kaam (fulfilment of desires, enjoyment of the offerings of this material world, and small or big common pleasures of life).

The three principles of political science and administration are Saam (conciliation, persuasion, gentlemanly behaviour, politeness, courteousness), Daam (use of largesse, gifts, aids, donations, charity and other material and monetary rewards and help), and Danda (to punish those who violate law and order).

By applying these basic principles, king Sudarshan was able to obtain rewards in all the three spheres or aspects of life--one, in dealing with his subjects and maintaining law and order in his kingdom, two, in leading a fruitful life that would grant him happiness and pleasure, and three, in being able to rein in his enemies and exercise control over them.

[Note--From a broader perspective, the three bodies of knowledge consist also of the following, and king Sudarshan, by interacting with learned scholars, gained knowledge of all of them --

(i) The three aspects of formal religion—Karma (doing rituals such as fire sacrifices and observance of sacraments; doing penance and Tapa), Gyan (learning the scriptures and their spiritual philosophy), and Dharma (righteousness and ethical way of life; making charities; helping others; being compassionate, considerate and kind; treating everyone alike).

(ii) The knowledge pertaining to the three holy fires also comes within the purview of the Trividya. These fires are—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’ (the fire of the household hearth), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) ‘Ahavaniya’ (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice).

(iii) The ability to have knowledge of what happened in the past, what is happening in the present, and what would happen in the future.

(iv) Knowledge of the three qualities that determine the basic character of a person. They are ‘Sata Guna’ or noble qualities, ‘Raja Guna’ or mundane and ordinary worldly qualities, and ‘Tama Guna’ or mean and base qualities.

(v) Knowledge of the three states of existence of pure consciousness—the waking state of consciousness called ‘Jagrat’, the dreaming state called ‘Swapna’, and the deep sleep state of consciousness called ‘Sushupta’.

(vi) Knowledge of the three primary Vedas known as Rig, Sam and Yajur, and the knowledge contained in them, known as Tri-Vidya.

(vii) Knowledge of Gyan Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga (pertaining to spiritual and metaphysical knowledge, devotion for God, and doing of deeds respectively).

(viii) Martial skills, administrative skills, and political skills.]

Verse no. 51:

व्यूहयः स्थितः किञ्चिदिवोत्तरार्धम् उन्नद्धचूडोऽञ्चितसव्यजानुः।

आकर्णमाकृष्टसबाणधन्वा व्यरोचतास्त्रेषु विनीयमानः॥ १८-५१

vyūhyaḥ sthitaḥ kiñcidivottarārdham unnaddhacūḍo'ñcitasavyajānuḥ |
ākaraṇamākṛṣṭasabāṇadhanvā vyarocatāstreṣu vinīyamānaḥ || 18-51

18-51. When he was training himself in the art of archery, he looked very beautiful with the upper part of his body tilted slightly forward, his long curly hairs tied in a tight bun on his head, his left thigh bent slightly at the knee, and with an arrow mounted on his bow, pulling the bow's string as far back as the ears.

Verse no. 52:

अथ मधु वनितानाम् नेत्रनिर्वेशनीय
मनसिजतरुपुष्पम् रागबन्धप्रवालम्।
अकृतकविधि सर्वाङ्गीणमाकल्पजातम्
इलसितपदमाद्यम् यौवनम् स प्रपेदे॥ १८-५२

atha madhu vanitānām netranirveśanīya
manasijatarupuṣṣam rāgabandhapravālam |
akṛtakavidhi sarvāṅgīṇamākālpajātam
ilasitapadamādyam yauvanam sa prapede || 18-52

18-52. In due course of time, king Sudarshan's body became so attractive that his sight aroused passions in the eyes of women as if they had drunk wine.

In the prime time of life when a man attains adulthood and has a well-developed and well-proportioned charming body, he resembles a mythical tree known as Kaam Tree, i.e. a tree that bears flowers and fruits of passions. A young adult man's handsome body is like the flower of youth and the charming season when trees bear new foliage, complete with the pollen and nectar of passions, and it becomes the first step towards arousing of passions and desires in women whose eyes swarm all over him like the honey bees which hover over a ripe flower in search of nectar.

[Note--Briefly, the idea is that a handsome young man naturally attracts the attention of women who gaze at him as if their were caressing him by the medium of their eyes, just like the case of a newly blooming flower that naturally attracts hordes of bees who make a bee-line to it with a desire to enjoy the flower's nectar and gather its pollen. The sight of such a man arouses passions and desires in the heart of adult women. So therefore, the sight of a handsome young man is the first destination for the eyes of a young woman of roughly his age, and it is the first step that stirs passions and desires in the woman's heart.]

Verse no. 53:

प्रतिकृतिरचनाभ्यो दूतिसंदर्शिताभ्यः
समधिकतररूपाः शुद्धसंतानकामैः।
अधिविविदुरमात्यैराहतास्तस्य यूनः

प्रथमपरिगृहीते श्रीभुवौ राजकन्याः॥ १८-५३

pratikṛtiracanābhyo dūtisaṁdarśitābhyah
samadhikatararūpāḥ śuddhasaṁtānakāmaiḥ |
adhivividuramātyairāhṛtāstasya yūnaḥ
prathamaparigṛhīte śrībhuvau rājakanyāḥ || 18-53

18.53. Female messengers were sent by king Sudarshan's ministers to all the capitals of great kingdoms of that era to bring pictures or portraits of eligible princesses who could be married to the king so that he begets a son befitting the dignity and majesty of his illustrious family.

Then, after due diligence and analysing the different aspects of the importance and influence of the future alliances, they selected some pictures and showed them to the king to make a choice. After that, all of them agreed to marry king Sudarshan to princesses who were more charming and beautiful in physical terms than what they looked like in their pictures.

Thence, king Sudarshan was married to such princesses, who aroused jealousy in the heart of the king's previous de-facto queens, the 'earth' and the 'rajya-laxmi'.

[Note--Traditionally, the earth and the kingdom's deity are regarded as de-facto queens of the ruling king of the kingdom. These two have a perpetual existence, and when one king dies and is replaced with another king, they accept the latter as their new lord.

But this is not applicable to the conventional queen, a woman, who would die one day like the king himself. Her place would be occupied by another incumbent when the new king, appointed on the throne in the place of the previous king, marries.

So, why would the earth and the rajya-laxmi become zealous of the new queen? It is because they think that the king would now pay more attention to his newly married physical companion, the woman called his queen and divert his time to attend her more, which translates into paying less attention to the other two de-facto queens in his life, i.e. the earth and the rajya-laxmi.

The idea is that if the king is conscientious, wise and intelligent, he would ensure that his duties and responsibilities towards the welfare of his kingdom and its subjects, represented by the earth and the rajya-laxmi, are not affected by him getting distracted by the queen, and that he pays full attention to both his queen as well as his kingdom and its subjects so that none of them feels neglected.]

इति महाकवि कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये अष्टदशः सर्गः॥

iti mahākavi kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye aṣṭadaśaḥ sargaḥ ||

Thus ends the 18th Canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Canto 19, verse nos. 1-57:

Canto 19 describes how the great dynasty of king Raghu, known as 'Raghu-vansha', and of which Lord Ram was also one of its kings, came to an end. The last king of this dynasty was Agnivarna who neglected the kingdom, and instead spent his life in sensual pursuits, causing his body to decay prematurely, leading to his death without leaving a male heir to the throne. He presided over the dishonourable end of the great dynasty of king Raghu.

Introduction

The son of king Sudarshan was called Agnivarna. Sudarshan appointed Agnivarna to the throne of the kingdom and himself went to a pilgrim place called Naimisharan to spend the rest of his life in spiritual pursuits and lived like a hermit.

In the beginning, king Agnivarna, who inherited a well-governed kingdom from his father, took interest in the affairs of the kingdom, but as fate would have it and destiny dictated, bad habits and interest in excessive indulgences in sensual pleasures got hold of king Agnivarna. He left the affairs of the kingdom in the hands of his ministers, and himself spent his time in pleasure activities in the company of women. He became so pervert and morally corrupt that every moment of his life he wanted to enjoy sensual pleasures and participate in various other pleasure activities that give joy.

He abandoned his duties towards the kingdom and its subjects, and spent his time in enjoying himself in his palace with the ladies of his women's quarters so much so that his subjects could rarely meet him. He loved the company of voluptuous women as well as music and dance performances, and other such pastimes of a man who is excessively indulgent and lascivious.

Kalidas gives us a vivid account of Agnivarna's immoral activities, and how he had wasted his time and life and the health of his body by indulgence in sensual pleasures and enjoyment of material comforts of the world. From what we read in this canto, king Agnivarna was least bothered that his vulgar life of promiscuity and excessive indulgences was bringing great dishonour to and undermining the dignity of the crown that was once worn by kings of a great family descending from king Raghu who created an empire stretching from the north to the south, and from the east to the west of the Indian sub-continent, hence called the Raghu dynasty, which had such illustrious, righteous, wise and famous kings as Lord Ram, king Dashrath and king Dilip as its members, and going further back when the same family was named after king Ikshwaku as the Ikshwaku dynasty, had king Sagar after whom the oceans were named as 'sagar', king Bhagirath who brought the holy river Ganges to the plains of India, and which was also called the Solar Race as it traced its origin to the Sun-God.

Inspite of the infamy his habits got him, and inspite of his neglecting the affairs of his kingdom due to his bad habits, no enemy king would attack his kingdom out of respect for the crown and the honour of the illustrious family to which he belonged.

But in due course of time, his body decayed and became diseased. It is believed that he got tuberculosis. He became pale and so weak that he needed the support of his servants even to walk short distances. His ministers, luckily, were good and loyal to the throne, so they stepped in and did what was best for the good and welfare of the kingdom and its subjects. They even hid the king's indulgences and perversions that had made him very sick, telling the people that the king is not attending his royal court or personally looking after the affairs of the kingdom as he is doing Tapa (penance) to beget a son.

When he finally died due to his incurable disease, the ministers, in consultation with priests, cremated him quietly within the palace precincts so that his untimely death was not made public before an alternative arrangement was made to fill the vacant throne. Towards this end, they hurriedly called a meeting and decided to appoint the senior-most queen, who was pregnant at the time, to the throne till the time she begot a son.

Now, since tradition mandated that a male offspring of a king would always inherit the crown, and since the queen still bore the child in her womb at the time her husband died and she ascended the throne of the kingdom, it was deemed that the race of king Raghu, known as the 'Raghu dynasty' or the 'Raghu-vansha', had come to a tragic end.

Hence, with the death of Agnivarna and his queen ascending the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya, we come to the end of Kalidas' narrative of the Raghu-vansha.

Agnivarna's story is a great lesson from history which tells us how a singularly pervert individual, with his bad habits, immorality, and excessive indulgences in sensual pleasures while neglecting his rightful duties and responsibilities, can not only bring infamy, dishonour and shame to a great and renowned family that has its roots firmly established in annals of history as being one in which great, illustrious, valiant and virtuous kings were born, but also cause an end to the lineage.

Agnivarna marked not only the end of the Raghu dynasty but also of the entire race known as the Solar Race, so-called because it descended from the Sun-God, and prior the its name being called Raghu-vansha, it was named as the Ikshwaku-vansha or the Ikshwaku dynasty after a great ancient king named Ikshwaku.

Now, let us read this last Canto verse-by-verse as follows--

Verse no. 1:

अग्निवर्णमभिषिच्य राघवः स्वे पदे तनयमग्नितेजसम्।

शिष्रिये श्रुतवतामपश्चिमः पश्चिमे वयसि नैमिषम् वशी॥ १९-१

agnivarnamabhiṣicya rāghavaḥ sve pade tanayamagnitejasam |
śiśriye śrutavatāmapāścimaḥ pāścime vayasi naimiṣam vaśī || 19-1

19-1. When king Sudarshan, who was fortunate to have taken birth in the illustrious and well-respected family of king Raghu, who was prominent amongst scholars, and who had practiced self-restraint over his sense organs, became old, he appointed his son named Agnivarna, so-called because he had a complexion that glowed like the radiance of the fire, on the throne of the kingdom, and himself went to live in the forest around the holy site of Naimisharanya (to do penance).

[Note--Naimisharanya-- It is also known as Nimisar or Naimisar. It is a pilgrimage site located near the city of Sitapur in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. It is situated on the banks of river Gomti, where great sages once gathered for spiritual discourses. It has a pond called Chakra Tirtha and is surrounded by forests; it was a primary meditation site for 88,000 sages in the past.

According to legends, when the sages wished to have a purified place with a fresh water source where they could do sacrifices and penances to ward-off the darkness of the approaching age of Kali Yuga, they prayed to Lord Brahma, the creator of this world, who created a giant mental wheel called a 'Manomaye Chakra' (manomaye = created by the mind; Chakra = wheel). He asked the sages to follow it, and when the wheel landed on earth at the site of the Naimisharanya Tirtha, it spun rapidly to cut a circular hole on the earth's surface, and the axle or the spindle of the wheel bored into the earth to create a bore-hole from which sprung a fountain of fresh water. The circular area scooped up by the rotating wheel was called Chakra Tirtha (a circular holy site), and the entire area was called 'Nimisharanya or Naimisharanya' because the word 'nemi' means the rim of a wheel. Later on, this wheel, which was a discus with sharp razor-like or saw-like circumference, was adopted by Lord Vishnu as his weapon, known as the Sudarshan Chakra.

Since it was created by Brahma, and since all the great sages of the time had congregated here to offer worship to gods and goddesses, hence all the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon had come to stay at one single place for their convenience. That is why it is believed that by worshipping at Naimisharanya Tirtha, a pilgrim gets the benefit of worshipping the gods and the goddesses at countless other holy sites.

It is also famous as the place where sage Veda Vyas divided the unified text of the Vedas into its four parts that came to be known as the Rig Veda, the Sam Veda, the Yajur Veda, and the Atharva Veda. It is here that Veda Vyas also narrated the Purans to the assembled sages.

It is the place where great sages and seers, led by great sage named Shaunak, gathered to perform a 12-year long sacrifice during which sage Ugrasara Sauti narrated the current version of the epic Mahabharat.]

Verse no. 2:

तत्र तीर्थसलिलेन दीर्घिकाः तल्पमन्तरितभूमिभिः कुशैः।

सौधवासमुदजेन विस्मृतः संचिकाय फलनिःस्पृहस्तपः॥ १९-२

tatra tīrthasalilena dīrghikāḥ talpamantaritabhūmibhiḥ kuśaiḥ |
saudhavāsamuṭajena vismrtaḥ saṁcikāya phalaniḥsprhastapaḥ || 19-2

19-2. While living a pious life in Naimisharanya, king Sudarshan slept peacefully on the ground on a bed made of kush grass near the holy pond (Chakra Tirtha), and forgot about the comforts of the royal cots on which he used to sleep near royal swimming pools where he would play water-sport in his palace. Similarly, he lived in a small hut made of reeds and forgot all about the majestic palaces where he lived earlier.

In this way, the king began living an austere life doing penance, meditation and self-sacrifice (i.e. sacrificing physical conveniences and comforts for the sake of purifying the soul).

Verse no. 3:

लब्धपालनविधौ न तत्सुतः खेदमाप गुरुणा हि मेदिनी।
भोक्तुमेव भुजनिर्जितद्विषा न प्रसाधयितुमस्य कल्पिता॥ १९-३

labdhapālanavidhau na tatsutaḥ khedamāpa guruṇā hi medinī |
bhoktumeva bhujanirjitadvīṣā na prasādhayitumasya kalpitā || 19-3

19-3. King Agnivarna had no difficulty in presiding over and running the affairs of his kingdom which he had inherited from his father king Sudarshan, because his father had already established a robust administrative system for the kingdom and had subdued all the enemies who might create problems in the future before he had handed over the reins to Agnivarna.

In other words, Agnivarna got a prosperous kingdom which he would directly enjoy without the bother of enemies and the trouble of establishing law and order.

Verse no. 4:

सोऽधिकारमभिकः कुलोचितम् काश्चन स्वयमवर्तयत्समाः।
संनिवेश्य सचिवेष्वतःपरम् स्त्रीविधेयनवयौवनोऽभवत्॥ १९-४

so'dhikāramabhikaḥ kulocitam kāścana svayamavartayatsamāḥ |
saṁniveśya saciveṣvataḥparam strīvidheyanaavayauvano'bhavat || 19-4

19-4. With ready-made pleasures and comforts available to him, and with no botheration of administrative affairs, king Agnivarna became lazy and complacent. He diverted his mind instead towards enjoyment of material comforts and sensual pleasures which were abundantly available to him for the asking.

For some initial years he did take active part in the affairs of the kingdom, but soon became bored with routine work. So, he left the affairs of the kingdom in the hands of his ministers, and himself began spending his time in enjoying the wine of youth in the company of voluptuous women in the women's quarters of his palace.

Verse no. 5:

कामिनीसहचरस्य कामिनः तस्य वेश्मसु मृदङ्गनादिषु।
ऋद्धिमन्तमधिकर्द्धिरुत्तरः पूर्वमुत्सवमपोहदुत्सवः॥ १९-५

kāminīśahacarasya kāmināḥ tasya veśmasu mṛdaṅganādiṣu |
ṛddhimantamadhikarḍhiruttaraḥ pūrvamutsavamapohadutsavaḥ || 19-5

19-5. That morally pervert and lascivious king Agnivarna had fallen from the noble path set by his ancestors. He would spend the whole day in the company of women in the women's quarters of his palace, and enjoyed hearing and playing musical instruments such as the Mridung (a barrel drum that is played on both its end), the sound of which reverberated in the palace, as well as participating in various concerts, festivities and celebrations which were so elaborately organised that the one held on the second day would be better than the one of the previous day.

Verse no. 6:

इन्द्रियार्थपरिशून्यमक्षमः सोढुमेकमपि स क्षणान्तरम्।
अन्तरेव विहरन्दिवानिशम् न व्यपैक्षत समुत्सुकाः प्रजाः॥ १९-६

indriyārthapariśūnyamakṣamaḥ soḍhumekamapi sa kṣaṇāntaram |
antareva viharandivāniśam na vyapaikṣata samutsukāḥ prajāḥ || 19-6

19-6. Agnivarna became so excessively indulgent in sensual pleasures that he could not resist the temptation of such enjoyments even for a fraction of his time. That is why he stayed in his palace day and night, amusing himself in myriad of ways. The subjects of the kingdom began to miss his presence in the royal court where they could directly interact with their king and let him be aware of their problems. But king Agnivarna completely neglected them, and never bothered to give them an audience.

Verse no. 7:

गौरवाद्यदपि जातु मन्त्रिणाम् दर्शनम् प्रकृतिकाङ्क्षितम् ददौ।
तद्गवाक्षविवरावलम्बिना केवलेन चरणेन कल्पितम्॥ १९-७

gauravādyadapi jātu mantriṇām darśanam prakṛtikāṅkṣitam dadau |
tadgavākṣavivarāvalambinā kevalena caraṇena kalpitam || 19-7

19-7. Whenever his ministers insisted that he ought to show himself to his subjects who were eager to have a glimpse of their king and pay their respects to him in accordance with tradition set by his ancestors (who would make regular appearances in the court and

interacted directly with their subjects), king Agnivarna would merely dangle one of his legs through the window of his palace quarter for the subjects to see, but he never bothered to come out in person to be present before them face to face. {Obviously it was a ridiculous and hilarious situation.}

Verse no. 8:

तम् कृतप्रणतयोऽनुजीविनः कोमलात्मनखरागरूषितम्।
भेजिरे नवदिवाकरातप स्पृष्टपङ्कजतुलाधिरोहणम्॥ १९-८

tam kṛtapraṇatayo'nujīvinah komalātmanakharāgarūṣitam |
bhejire navadivākarātapa sprṣṭapaṅkajatulādhirohaṇam || 19-8

19-8. The subjects and the servants of the kingdom would bow before his dangling foot and offer their respects to them by seeing the nails on his toes which were polished and manicured to perfection and looked like the red lotus flower on which the rays of the morning sun falls.

[Note--This verse highlights the fact that Agnivarna took great care in grooming himself. He was more concerned about how his own looks were, than looking after the state in which his subjects were.]

Verse no. 9:

यौवनोन्नतविलासिनीस्तन क्षोभलोलकमलाश्च दीर्घिकाः।
गूढमोहनगृहास्तदम्बुभिः स व्यगाहत विगाढमन्मथः॥ १९-९

Yauvanonnatavilāsiniṣṭana kṣobhalolakamalāśca dīrghikāḥ |
gūḍhamohanagrḥhāstadambubhiḥ sa vyagāhata vigāḍhamanmathaḥ || 19-9

19-9. Excessively lascivious king Agnivarna would play water-sport with beautiful women in the swimming pools of his palace; these pools were large and had pavilions where one could rest and enjoy himself.

When the large and well-formed muscular bosoms of those voluptuous ladies touched the lotus flowers in the swimming pools, the flowers too began to sway like the ladies themselves.

Verse no. 10:

तत्र सेकहतलोचनाञ्जनैः धौतरागपरिपाटलाधरैः।
अङ्गनास्तमधिकम् व्यलोभयन्न् अर्पितप्रकृतकान्तिभिर्मुखैः॥ १९-१०

tatra sekahr̥talocanāñjanaiḥ dhautarāgaparipāṭalādharaiḥ |
aṅganāstamadhikam vyalobhayann arpitaprakṛtakāntibhirmukhaiḥ || 19-10

19-10. When the mascara (a decorative paint of the eyelid and lashes) applied on the eyes of those women, as well as the lipstick applied on their lips got washed away by the water of the swimming pool, their natural beauty and charm came to the fore, which enthused Agnivarna and he got more attracted towards them, which in turn further stoked passions inside him.

Verse no. 11:

घ्राणकान्तमधुगन्धकर्षिणीः पानभूमिरचनाः प्रियासखः।
अभ्यपद्यत स वासितासखः पुष्पिताः कमलिनीरिव द्विपः॥ १९-११

ghrāṇakāntamadhugandhakarṣiṇīḥ pānabhūmiracanāḥ priyāsakhaḥ |
abhyapadyata sa vāsītāsakhaḥ puṣpitāḥ kamalinīriva dvipaḥ || 19-11

19-11. Just like a male elephant in rut gets attracted towards a pond of lotus flowers when it sees the blooming flowers and smells its fragrance, and heads straight to it with its female companions, so likewise Agnivarna got attracted by the sweet aroma of wine wafting out from the drinking lounges alongside the swimming pool where he was playing water-sport, and headed to these lounges, where the atmosphere was heavy with the scent of wine, with his female companions to enjoy himself further.

Verse no. 12:

सातिरेकमदकारणम् रहः तेन दत्तमभिलेषुरङ्गनाः।
ताभिरप्युपहतम् मुखासवम् सोऽपिबद्बकुलतुल्यदोहदः॥ १९-१२

sātirekamadakāraṇam rahaḥ tena dattamabhileṣuraṅganāḥ |
tābhirapyupahṛtam mukhāsavam so'pibadbakulatulyadohadaḥ || 19-12

19-12. The lustful pretty women would yearn to suck a mouthful of wine from the lips of Agnivarna, and similarly he too would yearn to suck a mouthful of wine from the lips of his female companions just like the Vakul tree yearns to be touched by the lips of women.

[Note--¹The Vakul tree is called Spanish Cherry, Bullet Wood or Indian Medlar. Its botanical name is Mimusops elengi. According to folklore, this tree would yield flowers only when women spit mouthfuls of wine on it, especially at the tree's roots. The flowers are fragrant, and attract nectar-seeking bees.

Just like this tree that would be satisfied only when women spit mouthful of wine on its roots, because only then would the tree bear fruits and flowers, so likewise

Agnivarna derived great satisfaction only when he would lock his lips with the women's lips and suck wine directly from their mouths, instead of drinking it from a wine-cup.

Truly, when any person of basic morality and good character would read what Agnivarna used to do, he would develop disgust for the king and his behaviour. As we proceed with our reading of what Agnivarna used to do, we would begin to loathe him. His sexual orgies were chillingly maniacal, and sure enough this caused his body to decay and become diseased with tuberculosis, leading ultimately to his death.]

Verse no. 13:

अङ्कमङ्कपरिवर्तनोचिते तस्य निन्यतुरशून्यतामुभे।

वल्लकी च हृदयंगमस्वना वल्गुवागपि च वामलोचना॥ १९-१३

añkamañkaparivartanocite tasya ninyaturaśūnyatāmubhe |

vallakī ca hr̥dayaṅgamasvanā valguvāgapi ca vāmalocanā || 19-13

19-13. There were only two things which he thought were fit for his company and eligible to sit on his lap--one was the Veena (a stringed musical instrument; the Indian lute), and the other was a beautiful woman. So therefore, every moment of his life he had these two entities on his either sides--Veena on one side, and a beautiful woman on the other side, or were found resting on his laps.

Verse no. 14:

स स्वयम् प्रहतपुष्करः कृती लोलमाल्यवलयो हरन्मनः।

नर्तकीरभिनयातिलङ्घिनीः पार्श्ववर्तिषु गुरुष्वलज्जयत्॥ १९-१४

sa svayam prahatapuṣkaraḥ kṛtī lolamālyavalayo haranmanah |

nartakīrabhinayātīlaṅghinīḥ pārśvavartīṣu guruṣvalajjayat || 19-14

19-14. When female dancers used to dance in front of Agnivarna, he would play music on the Mridanga and the Tabla (which are respectively a barrel drum with two sides for playing music, and a half drum with only one side on which it is played) to accompany them. When he became engrossed in playing music to coincide with their movements, he would sway from side to side, which resulted in the garland around his neck to sway too.

It presented an enchanting scene, and the dancers would gaze at him with admiration so much so that often they would miss their steps or even stopped altogether just to gaze at the charming figure of the king lost in enjoying the intoxication provided by a cocktail of music and dance.

The effect was that these female dancers would feel bashful before their male teachers or guides who would be closely watching their behaviour.

Verse no. 15:

चारु नृत्यविगमे स तन्मुखम् स्वेदभिन्नतिलकम् परिश्रमात्।
प्रेमदत्तवदनानिलः पिबन् अत्यजीवदमरालकेश्वरौ॥ १९-१५

cāru nṛtyavigame sa tanmukham svedabhinnatīlakam pariśramāt |
premadattavadanānilaḥ piban atyajīvadamarālakeśvarau || 19-15

19-15. When the dance ended and sweat drops appeared on the faces of those female dancers, the lustful Agnivarna got so much aroused by passion that he would puff air from his mouth on their faces to dry those sweat drops, and on this pretext brought his lips so close to their mouths that he would start kissing them passionately. While engaged in this activity, he thought that he was more fortunate and privileged than Indra (the lord of heaven) and Kuber (the lord of heaven's treasury).

Verse no. 16:

तस्य सावरणदृष्टसंधयः काम्यवस्तुषु नवेषु सङ्गिनः।
वल्लभाभिरुपसृत्य चक्रिरे सामिभुक्तविषयाः समागमा॥ १९-१६

tasya sāvaraṇadr̥ṣṭasandhayaḥ kāmyavastuṣu naveṣu saṅginaḥ |
vallabhābhirupasṛtya cakrire sāmibhuktaviṣayāḥ samāgamā || 19-16

19-16. Every day Agnivarna wished to have something new for enjoyment, and when he was satisfied with it he would discard it for some other newer thing. That is why young women would leave him half-way while having intercourse with him because they feared that if the king had his full session of intercourse with them and felt satisfied with them, then he would oust them from his female quarters of the palace, and bring in some new women.

Verse no. 17:

अङ्गुलीकिसलयाग्रतर्जनम् भ्रूविभङ्गकुटिलम् च वीक्षितम्।
मेखलाभिरसकृच्च बन्धनम् वञ्चयन्प्रणयिनीरवाप सः॥ १९-१७

aṅgulīkisalayāgratarjanam bhrūvibhaṅgakuṭīlam ca vīkṣitam |
mekhalābhirasakṛcca bandhanam vañcayanprāṇayinīravāpa saḥ || 19-17

19-17. If Agnivarna slyly coveted some new member of his harem and felt more attracted towards her (because he wanted something fresh as he felt bored with the company of previous women whom he regarded as being stale and done with), then the earlier women would feel jealous. They would reprimand him by waving their fingers, which had red nail-polish on their nails, angrily at him, scolded him with their screwed eyebrows, and even went to the extent of tying him down with their hip girdles.

[Note--Just imagine to what extent Agnivarna, who was a 'king' of these women and not their servant, had allowed himself to fall so low that these lowly women could scold and upbraid him so boldly and with impunity, and he would just listen to them with a sheepish smile. Immoral habits, sexual perversions, excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures, and moral turpitude, as well as diversion from the path of Dharma and Karma proved to be the factors that unravelled Agnivarna, bringing him down to his knees.

Oh gosh! Its such a great irony of fate and pity that a king of the great dynasty of kings tracing back their roots to the likes of Lord Ram, Raghu and Dilip, and further back to king Sagar whose sons had created the oceans, king Bhagirath who brought the Ganges, king Ikshwaku who established this dynasty in the beginning, and the Sun-God after whom this race was called the Solar Race, would become as fallen and disgraceful as king Agnivarna had become.

All women were jealous of each other as they competed to gain nearness to and attention of king Agnivarna. The promiscuous and sexually pervert king on his part was so overcome with passion and desires for sensual gratification that no matter how crudely or rudely these competing women with low morals insulted or taunted him, he would not mind them or their nasty comments, but rather felt glad that so many beauties, who were burning with passion and were sexually aroused, were vying with each other to gain access to him, were passionate about him, and had a strong desire to have sexual intercourse with him. Instead of feeling ashamed, embarrassed or guilty at his conduct, specially when he was a descendant of a great and righteous family to which Lord Ram, and earlier to him his forefathers kings Dilip and Raghu, belonged, this particular king felt romantic and happy at his sexual adventures, his abilities and potency to satisfy so many beauties at one go; he thought that he has some unique charisma and masculinity that attract these beauties to him in droves just like ants get drawn naturally to some sweet-dish left in the open, and once there, all of them crowd around the dish to grab their share before its too late. This contemptible character, pervert nature and reprehensible attitude of this morally corrupt and disgraceful king was primarily responsible for his downfall, and it brought to an end the great and reputed family of kings, descending from king Raghu and his father king Dilip, a family renowned for its righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety in all spheres of life, and a family which the Lord Ram himself chose to take birth in. This morally turpitude king, and his over-indulgence in sexual activities, had a profoundly ruining impact on his health, making him fragile, impotent, weak and decrepit, ultimately leading to his premature death.]

Verse no. 18:

तेन दूतिविदितम् निषेदुषा पृष्ठतः सुरतवाररात्रिषु।

शुश्रुवे प्रियजनस्य कातरम् विप्रलम्भपरिशङ्किनो वचः॥ १९-१८

tena dūtividitam niṣeduṣā prṣṭhataḥ suratavārārātriṣu |

śuśruve priyajanasya kātaram vipralambhapariśaṅkino vacaḥ || 19-18

19-18. When Agnivarna wished to go to a woman to have intercourse with her, he would call his female messenger and tell her to go to that lady with his message of love, and he would hide himself to listen to the conversation between the two. While thus listening to what transpired between the messenger and the lady in question, and the giggle and taunts of the two women, he felt passionate and thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a sort of daily amusement for him.

Verse no. 19:

लौल्यमेत्य गृहिणीपरिग्रहात् नर्तकीष्वसुलभासु तद्वपुः।
वर्तते स्म स कथंचिदालिखन् अङ्गुलीक्षणसन्नवर्तिकः॥ १९-१९

laulyametya gr̥hiṇīparigrahāt nartakīṣvasulabhāsu tadvapuḥ |
vartate sma sa kathamcidālikhan aṅgulīkṣaraṇasannavartikaḥ || 19-19

19-19. Whenever his rightfully married queens would intervene to stop those dancers from approaching Agnivarna, he would miss them and feel distraught. To overcome his dismay, he would hold a brush and start painting a portrait of his lady-love which helped him remember her closely, because while painting he had to have a clear image of hers before his mental eyes. This once again aroused his desires and he became so nervous that his fingers would begin to sweat, and the brush would slip from his fingers. But unwilling to give up, he would somehow finish her portrait with great difficulty.

[Note--The idea is that Agnivarna's mind was always occupied by the thoughts of the many voluptuous women in his harem. This verse makes it clear that these women were different from his queens. The queens were married to him, but the dancers, courtesan and other harem-women were like prostitutes kept by him for his myriad orgies for sensual pleasures and extra-marital enjoyments.

In all probability, Agnivarna kept his queens in a separate quarter of the sprawling palace complex, and some other part of the palace was kept reserved for his sexual orgies. His queens perhaps had no idea of what he was doing, or they kept quiet to preserve their own dignity, life and privileges, as raising a hue and cry would serve them no purpose. Besides this, the queens feared that if they stretched things too far, the king would snap and punish them with death by poisoning.]

Verse no. 20:

प्रेमगर्वितविपक्षमत्सरात् आयताश्च मदनान्महीक्षितम्।
निन्युरुत्सवविधिच्छलेन तम् देव्य उज्जितरुषः कृतार्थताम्॥ १९-२०

premagarvitavipakṣamatsarāt āyatāśca madanānmahīkṣitam |
ninyurutsavavidhicchalena tam devya ujṛṇitaruṣaḥ kṛtārthatām || 19-20

19-20. If the king happened to love one of his many queens, she would feel privileged and proud of her success in attracting the attention of the king (which she deemed to be a great achievement). This filled other queens with jealousy towards her, and they too yearned to arouse passions in the king so that he would be drawn towards them also. So they would find some excuse, such as some religious occasion or festival, to call the king to their quarters, where they would satisfy their own lust by having an intercourse with him.

Verse no. 21:

प्रातरेत्य परिभोगशोभिना दर्शनेन कृतखण्डनव्यथाः।

प्राञ्जलिः प्रणयिनीः प्रसादयन् सोऽदुनोत्प्रणयमन्थरः पुनः॥ १९-२१

prātaretya paribhogaśobhinā darśanena kṛtakhaṇḍanavyathāḥ |
prāñjaliḥ praṇayinīḥ prasādayan so'dunotpraṇayamantharaḥ punaḥ || 19-21

19-21. If Agnivarna sneaked out of his palace in the quiet of the night to have intercourse with a woman somewhere outside of his palace, and returned to his palace at dawn, his lady-loves (queens, dancers, courtesans and other women of his palace's harem) would instantly know of his exploits by the clothes he wore, and they would start lamenting and weeping like a cheated heroin. {They would lament that the king found them stale and inept, and not upto his taste, so that he had to go elsewhere to satisfy himself.}

At that time, the king would stand before them with his palms touching each other in a gesture of pleading forgiveness and trying to appease them.

But during the night when he could not satisfy their lust because of tiredness¹, they would become restless once again. {Because they thought that the king wants to avoid them with the excuse of being tired.}

[Note--¹This verse lays the foundation of what surely was to happen to Agnivarna's body as it gradually lost its energy and vitality by constant over-indulgences, which led to dissipation and loss of vigour in him.]

Verse no. 22:

स्वप्नकीर्तितविपक्षमङ्गनाः प्रत्यभैत्सुरवदन्त्य एव तम्।

प्रच्छदान्तगलिताश्रुबिन्दुभिः क्रोधभिन्नवलयैर्विवर्तनैः॥ १९-२२

svapnakīrtitavipakṣamaṅganāḥ pratyabhaitsuravadantya eva tam |
pracchadāntagalitāśrubindubhiḥ krodhabhinnavalayairvivartanaiḥ || 19-22

19-22. When the woman who was in bed with him during the night saw that Agnivarna was muttering the name of another woman in his sleep and praising her, the former would feel exasperated. She would leave him and slip to the side of the bed where she would weep in frustration, and break her bracelet in anger. Then she would turn her back to him

and went to sleep. {Breaking the bracelet is a gesture that implies that this woman was determined not to have anything to do with Agnivarna any longer.}

Verse no. 23:

क्लृप्तपुष्पशयनामल्लतागृहान् एत्या दूतिकृतमार्गदर्शनः।

अन्वभूत्परिजनाङ्गनारतम् सोऽवरोधभयवेपथूत्तरम्॥ १९-२३

kl̥ptapuṣṣaśayanāmlatāgrhān etya dūtikṛtamārgadarśanaḥ |
anvabhūtparijanāṅganāratam so'varodhabhayavepathūttaram || 19-23

19-23. It often happened that maidservants would escort Agnivarna to the royal gardens where, under the cover of creepers, a bed covered with flowers had been laid ready for him to have sexual intercourse with some mistress. At that time, the king was afraid that the maidservants might go and report to the queens about what he was doing. So to keep their mouths shut, he would have sexual intercourse with them too. {Agnivarna had fallen to such a low level of immorality that he had no regrets or sense of guilt or shame in having sex even with his maidservants.}

[Note: King Agnivarna has been described as having numerous mistresses and concubines, and leading the life of an immoral, pervert and lascivious rake. He had no control over his mind and senses, fell prey to sensual temptations, and neither could he exercise restraint over his body when it came to sexual gratification; he did not think twice in having sexual intercourse with his female attendants if he did not find another lady of his choice lying on his couch ready to receive him instantly. He was so blind in his passions that he would not even see which lady was lying on the bed, and he would immediately have intercourse with anyone he found there. This led to a lot of mixing up and intrigue amongst the women of the harem. For instance, if a particular lady had the turn to go to the bed with king Agnivarna, and before she actually arrived another one came in, the king would not know who she was. When the lady who was scheduled to bed him arrived, the two women would start fighting and arguing, and the king would then bed them both, one after another. Such was his depravation, turpitude and perversion, such was his shameful act and disgraceful character that one would bow his own head down when reading about this fallen man.

His sexual over-indulgence played havoc with his body and its vitality, leading to rapid decay and decline of all vital organs, and dissipation of vital energy of the human body. It broke down his health very quickly, creating a wreck, and culminating in his premature death.

The lesson we learn from the case of Agnivarna is that though this king was born in a highly renowned and respected family of kings, to which Lord Ram himself belonged, yet his individual reprehensible character, his lack of self-control, his promiscuity and over-indulgence not only hastened his own death, but brought a scar of ignominy and disgrace upon the entire race of king Raghu. To wit, it is upto us to decide the course of our lives and how we would be remembered in history; simply being born in a famous family will serve no worthwhile purpose. On the contrary, our bad and

contemptible actions will ruin the goodwill that our forefathers had developed by their strenuous efforts over a long period of time. The more we read about this man, the more will we be convinced about this observation.]

Verse no. 24:

नाम वल्लभजनस्य ते मया प्राप्य भाग्यमपि तस्य काङ्क्ष्यते।
लोलुपम् ननु मनो ममेति तम् गोत्रविस्खलितमूचुरङ्गनाः॥ १९-२४

nāma vallabhajanasya te mayā prāpya bhāgyamapi tasya kāṅkṣyate |
lolupam nanu mano mameti tam gotraviskhalitamūcuraṅganāḥ || 19-24

19-24. In case Agnivarna would, by the slip-of-tongue or unwittingly, utter the name of one of his mistresses from outside his harem (i.e. from somewhere outside of the walls of the palace), then those within his harem would retort that the woman concerned was indeed very fortunate (that the king found so much interest in her, to the extent of taking the risk of going out to meet her or even calling her to the palace, something which would be hard to keep concealed from the eyes of his subjects.)

But these women told the king that whatever be the case, they loved his company so much that inspite of his betraying them they still would not leave him.

Verse no. 25:

चूर्णबभ्रु लुलितस्रगाकुलम् छिन्नमेखलमलक्तकाङ्कितम्।
उत्थितस्य शयनम् विलासिनः तस्य विभ्रमरतान्यपावृणोत्॥ १९-२५

cūrṇababhru lulitasragākulam chinnamekhalamalakṭakāṅkitam |
utthitasya śayanam vilāsinaḥ tasya vibhramaratānyapāvṛṇot || 19-25

19-25. When Agnivarna got up in the morning, the bed-sheet of his couch would be spoilt with powders of Keshar (saffron) and Kumkum (a red pigment made by mixing dried turmeric and slaked lime), as well as crushed garlands and broken bracelets. This clearly implied that he had spent the night with a woman of his choice, and had played sex sport with her, rolling and tossing about on the couch, which resulted in the garlands getting crushed, the bracelets getting broken, and the bed sheet getting covered with powders of Kumkum and Keshar which got dusted off from their bodies.

Verse no. 26:

स स्वयम् चरणरागमादधे योषिताम् न च तथा समाहितः।
लोभ्यमाननयनः श्लथांशुकैः मेखलागुणपदैर्नितम्बिभिः॥ १९-२६

sa svayam caraṇarāgamādadhe yoṣitām na ca tathā samāhitāḥ |
lobhyamānanayanaḥ ślathāṁśukaiḥ mekhalāguṇapadairnitambibhiḥ || 19-26

19-26. It often happened that Agnivarna would sit down himself to apply a paint of red dye on the feet of a fair-complexioned woman. At that time, his eyes would catch the sight of the woman's breasts from which the covering cloth had slipped away. This excited him so much that he could not even apply the paint properly (as his hands shook in sexual arousal)¹.

[Note--¹Refer also to verse no. 19.]

Verse no. 27:

चुम्बने विपरिवर्तिताधरम् हस्तरोधि रशनाविघट्टने।
विघ्नितेच्छमपि तस्य सर्वतो मन्मथेन्धनमभूद्वधूरतम्॥ १९-२७

cumbane viparivartitādharam hastarodhi raśanāvighaṭṭane |
vighnitecchamapi tasya sarvato manmathendhanamabhūdvdhūratam ||
19-27

19-27. During the course of his sex play, when he tried to passionately kiss his lady-love, she would turn her face away from him; when he tried to untie her hip girdle (in order to expose her sex organ so that he can have intercourse with her), she would firmly hold his hands and pushed them away. In this way, the more hurdles the lady presented to him in satisfying his lust, the more sexually aroused he became; the greater the obstacle, the more his fire of passion was stoked.

{And this perhaps is the reason why his bed-sheet was covered with dust of Kumkum and Keshar, and crushed flowers of the garlands and broken bracelets as described in the previous verse no. 26.}

[Note: It may be said that Kalidas was a poet, and as such he may have exaggerated things to make his narration exceptionally interesting and absorbing while adding an element of erotica into his writing at the same time. But he must be given this freedom of expression to tell us the story in a very vivid manner in the way he thought fit to tell his readers as to why and how Agnivarna's reckless life led to his premature death and the end of the great dynasty of king Raghu. As a poet of the highest quality who was famous for his deft use of words to describe events most vividly, and as poets allow their imaginations to fly high, it may be said that each and every event that Kalidas has described in such vivid details may be a bit of an exaggeration, but it is more because it was an effort on his part to emphasise the nature and extent of Agnivarna's downfall, his moral turpitude, his highly disgraceful conduct, and his reprehensible character that he had resorted to such descriptions. From a practical point of view, Agnivarna was no less than a sex maniac, a morally pervert and a promiscuous demon.]

Verse no. 28:

दर्पणेषु परिभोगदर्शिनीः नर्मपूर्वमनुपृष्ठसंस्थिताः।

छायया स्मितमनोज्ञया वधूः ह्रीनिमीलितमुखीश्चकार सः॥ १९-२८

darpaṇeṣu paribhogadarśinīḥ narmapūrvamanuprṣṭhasaṁsthitāḥ |
chāyayā smitamanojñayā vadhūḥ hrinimīlitamukhīścakāra saḥ || 19-28

19-28. When the lady with whom he had sexual intercourse stood before a mirror to examine her body which bore marks of teeth bite and forceful intercourse inflicted upon her at the time when Agnivarna had passionately bitten her or used force to penetrate her sex organs, the lascivious king would quietly hide behind her. When the lady saw his image in the mirror, she would feel embarrassed and lower her face bashfully in shame.

Verse no. 29:

कण्ठसक्तमृदुबाहुबन्धनम् न्यस्तपादतलमग्रपादयोः।

प्रार्थयन्त शयनोत्थितम् प्रियाः तम् निशात्ययविसर्गचुम्बनम्॥ १९-२९

kaṇṭhasaktamṛdubāhubandhanam nyastapādatalamagrapādayoḥ |
prārthayanta śayanotthitam priyāḥ tam nīśātyayavisargacumbanam || 19-29

19-29. In the morning when Agnivarna got up from his bed to leave, the woman with whom he had sex the previous night wished that he should passionately embrace and kiss her once more before leaving.

{Perhaps this was because she was not certain if he would come to her again in the near future, as all the women of the harem knew how he loved to have a new woman each night.}

Verse no. 30:

प्रेक्ष्य दर्पणतलस्थमात्मनो राजवेषमतिशक्रशोभिनम्।

पिप्रिये न स तथा यथा युवा व्यक्तलक्ष्मपरिभोगमण्डनम्॥ १९-३०

prekṣya darpaṇatalasthamātmāno rājaveṣamatiśakrāśobhinam |
pipriye na sa tathā yathā yuvā vyaktalakṣmaparibhogamaṇḍanam || 19-30

19-30. Agnivarna did not feel as happy when he looked at his royal robes that were more beautiful than perhaps those worn by Indra, the king of heaven, as he felt when he saw the marks of sexual intercourse with ladies of his choice.

{This pervert and sexually maniacal man felt more happy to see marks of his sexual exploits on his body than he felt by wearing royal robes which vied in magnificence with the clothes of Indra.}

Verse no. 31:

मित्रकृत्यमपदिश्य पार्श्वतः प्रस्थितम् तमनवस्थितम् प्रियाः।

विद्म हे शठ पलायनच्छलानि अञ्जसेति रुरुधुः कचग्रहैः॥ १९-३१

mitrakṛtyamapadiśya pārśvataḥ prasthitam tamanavasthitam priyāḥ |
vidma he śaṭha palāyanacchalāni añjaseti rurudhuḥ kacagrahaiḥ || 19-31

19-31. It sometimes happened that while sitting with one of his queens he would suddenly remember one of the other women housed in his harem or some mistress he was fond of. Then he became so restless to go and meet her that he would tell his queen that he has some urgent work and is going to meet one of his friends. The queen would, by experience and intuition, instantly know what he meant by a 'friend', so she would rebuke and taunt him, saying she knew who that 'friend' was! Then the queen would stop him from going out by grabbing the locks of his hair and pulling him back.

[Note--What a hilarious scene is this--a queen grabbing a king's hair and pulling him down because she knows that he was going to meet another woman!]

Kalidas wishes to convey a message that when a person has lost his self-control and dignity because of his bad habits, moral turpitude and loose character, he becomes so fallen and a slave of his habits that all insults and the worst of insinuations fail to make any impact on him as long as he is able to carry on with his disgraceful pursuits. He becomes shameless and immune to rebuke. He has no self-respect, and dignity no longer exists in his dictionary.]

Verse no. 32:

तस्य निर्दयरतिश्रमालसाः कण्ठसूत्रमपदिश्य योषितः।

अध्यशेरत बृहद्भुजान्तरम् पीवरस्तनविलुप्तचन्दनम्॥ १९-३२

tasya nirdayaratiśramālasāḥ kaṇṭhasūtramapadiśya yoṣitaḥ |
adhyaśerata bṛhadbhujāntaram pīvarastanaviluptacandanam || 19-32

19-32. When the lady became weary of rough sex by Agnivarna, who went to the extent of using violence on her body to satisfy his lust so much so that the paste of sandalwood on her well-formed breasts would fall off in flakes when he squeezed or rubbed them with his hands, she would get on top of him face down, hold him tightly around his neck as if embracing him, and go to sleep as he lay prostrate on the couch. It gave the impression that she was practicing one of the postures of intercourse whereby the couple embrace each other tightly around their necks just like the 'Kantha Sutra', i.e. a girdle with some gem attached to it that one wears around the neck as an ornament.

[Note--The idea is that when the lady got fed-up by constant squeezing and rubbing of her breasts by Agnivarna, then to avoid more pain and get rid of the nonsense, she rode on him face down as he lay on his back on the couch, and then held her hands tightly

around his neck in a grip resembling an embrace, which left no space for him to torment her body any longer.]

Verse no. 33:

संगमाय निशि गूढचारिणम् चारदूतिकथितम् पुरोगताः।
वञ्चयिष्यसि कुतस्तमोवृतः कामुकेति चकृषुस्तमङ्गनाः॥ १९-३३

saṅgamāya niśi gūḍhacāriṇam cāradūtikathitam purogatāḥ |
vañcayiṣyasi kutastamovṛtaḥ kāmuketi cakṛṣustamaṅganāḥ || 19-33

19-33. When Agnivarna wished to sneak out of his quarters in the palace to go out in the dark of the night to meet one of his mistresses, then his maidservants played spoil-sport by going and reporting the development to the women in the palace's women's quarters. These women came out and confronted the king, pulling him back rudely and rebuking him, saying 'Where are you going slyly in the dark of night by cheating us?'

Verse no. 34:

योषितामुडुपतेरिवार्चिषाम् स्पर्शनिवृत्तिमसाववाप्नुवन्।
आरुरोह कुमुदाकरोपमाम् रात्रि जागरपरो दिवाशयः॥ १९-३४

yoṣitāmuḍupaterivārciṣām sparśanivṛttimasāvavāpnuvan |
āruroha kumudākaropamām rātrijāgaraparo divāśayaḥ || 19-34

19-34. Company of women and their touch gave Agnivarna the same pleasure that one would get by being caressed by the soothing and cooling light of the full moon. Hence, as a result of this habit, he would spend the whole night in a wakeful state, enjoying their company and playing out his sex sport with them, and slept during the whole of the next day.

Verse no. 35:

वेणुना दशनपीडिताधरा वीणया नखपदाङ्कितोरवः।
शिल्पकार्य उभयेन वेजिताः तम् विजिहमनयना व्यलोभयन्॥ १९-३५

veṇunā daśanapīḍitādhara vīṇayā nakhapadāṅkitoravaḥ |
śilpakārya ubhayena vejitāḥ tam vijihmanayanā vyalobhayan || 19-35

19-35. Agnivarna had bitten the ladies so viciously on their lips and scratched their thighs with his nails that both their lips and their thighs became sore and bruised to the extent that these poor women could neither hold a flute on their lips nor rest the lute on their laps during musical sessions. Though they could not say anything openly against their

tormentor, but sure enough they would glare at him angrily, but instead of either having shame or regret, he would enjoy their uneasiness and become sexually aroused.

[Note--He thought that they were indirectly teasing him for being so crude with them, and decided that the next time he was in bed with them he would ride more rough-shod on them as they enjoyed his violent sex play. Mentally he would think how he would grapple with them, overcome their resistance, and force himself upon them as a symbolic conquest by a king.]

Verse no. 36:

अङ्गसत्त्ववचनाश्रयम् मिथः स्त्रीषु नृत्यमुपधाय दर्शयन्।
स प्रयोगनिपुणैः प्रयोक्तृभिः संजघर्ष सह मित्रसंनिधौ॥ १९-३६

aṅgasattvavacanāśrayam mithaḥ strīṣu nṛtyamupadhāya darśayan |
sa prayoganipuṇaiḥ prayoktr̥bhiḥ saṁjagharṣa saha mitrasaṁnidhau || 19-36

19-36. When Agnivarna sat alone with his like-minded friends, he would describe vividly the different gestures, body parts and spoken words of the women he has had sex with or with whom he had participated in dance and music parties, as if he was an expert scribe describing some sporting event in its finest detail, or a music and dance teacher or a teacher of theatre who was eloquently explaining to his companions or students each move a heroin made on stage, or each word that she had spoken.

{So mad he had become that he did not even think what impression would he leave on his companions, especially when he was their monarch, and not a college class-mate.}

Verse no. 37:

अंसलम्बिकुटजार्जुनस्रजः तस्य नीपरजसाङ्गरागिणः।
प्रावृषि प्रमदबर्हिणेष्वभूत् कृत्रिमाद्रिषु विहारविभ्रमः॥ १९-३७

aṁsalambikuṭajārjunasrajaḥ tasya nīparajasāṅgarāgiṇaḥ |
prāvr̥ṣi pramadabarhiṇeṣvabhūt kṛtrimādrīṣu vihāravibhramaḥ || 19-37

19-37. During the rainy seasons, Agnivarna wore a garland of flowers of the Kutaj¹ and Arjun² trees, smeared a past of pollen from the Kadamba flower³ on his body, and like an elephant in rut would go to hills to amuse himself there⁴.

[Note--¹The Katuj tree is called the Easter or Ivory tree; it has five-petaled white flowers; botanical name: Holarrhena antidysenterica).

²The Arjun is also called the 'Guardian of the Heart' as it is very useful in heart diseases. Its botanical name is Terminalia arjuna. It has pale yellow or white flowers.

³The Kadamba bears globe-shaped golden-yellow or orange coloured flowers. It is regarded as an emblem of love, and hence often called a 'tree of love'. It also has extensive medicinal value in traditional medicine system of India.

⁴From what we read in the next verse no. 38, it would be evident that there were royal pleasure houses on these hills too. When Agnivarna went there, he would be accompanied by large group of his women, and while staying on the hills during the rainy season he would indulge in the same sort of sexual activities as he was habituated to while living in his palace in the capital city.]

Verse no. 38:

विग्रहाच्च शयने पराङ्मुखीः न अनुनेतुमबलाः स तत्त्वरे।
आचकाङ्क्ष घनशब्दविक्रवाः ता विवृत्य विशतीर्भुजान्तरम्॥ १९-३८

vigrahācca śayane parāṅmukhīḥ na anunetumabalāḥ sa tatvare |
ācakāṅkṣa ghanaśabdaviklavāḥ tā vivṛtya viśatīrbhujāntaram || 19-38

19-38. When the ladies on his couch became annoyed with Agnivarna and turned their back to him to go to sleep during the nights, he would not try to persuade them to turn over and make love to him. He would rather wait in the hope that a loud clap of thunder would frighten them so much that they would turn over themselves and cling to him in a tight embrace.

Verse no. 39:

कार्तिकीषु सवितानहर्म्यभाक् यामिनीषु ललिताङ्गनासखः।
अन्वभुङ्क्त सुरतश्रमापहाम् मेघमुक्तविशदाम् स चन्द्रिकाम्॥ १९-३९

kārtikīṣu savitānaharmyabhāk yāminīṣu lalitāṅganāsakhah |
anvabhukta surataśramāpahām meghamuktaviśadām sa candrikām || 19-39

19-39. When he stayed in his palace, he would get canopies stretched across the terrace of his palace where he would go with his women during the nights of the Kartika month¹ to enjoy moonlight while the ladies accompanying him spread themselves in the moonlight of a cloud-less sky when they got tired of his libidinous activities and sex-plays.

[Note--¹The Kartika month is eighth month of the Hindu calendar that coincides roughly with the months of October and November. During this period, the sky is clear and the moon shines brilliantly.]

Verse no. 40:

सैकतम् स सरयूम् विवृण्वतीम् श्रोणिबिम्बमिव हंसमेखलम्।
स्वप्रियाविलसितानुकारिणीम् सौधजालविवरैर्व्यलोकयत्॥ १९-४०

saikatam sa sarayūm vivṛṇvatīm śroṇibimbamiva haṁsamekhalam |
svapriyāvilasitānukāriṇīm saudhajālavivarairvyalokayat || 19-40

19-40. When Agnivarṇa looked at river Saryu from one of the latticed windows of his palace, he would see rows of swans sitting alongside the river's banks. His infatuated and corrupt mind would liken the beauty of the river to his lady-loves, the curve in the river's sand-covered banks¹ to their fair hips, and the swans to the hip-girdles of these ladies*.

[Note--*This verse can be interpreted in another way also as follows: When Agnivarṇa looked at river Saryu from one of the latticed windows of his palace, he would see rows of swans on the river's curved banks. His infatuated and perverted mind would interpret these swans as beautiful women, wearing waist-bands around their hips, lining up along the banks of the river to take a plunge in it for enjoying sport.

¹River Saryu takes a parabolic bend on the northern periphery of Ayodhya, with the city itself situated on the inner side of the curve. This physical feature is clearly visible from a high point.]

Verse no. 41:

मर्मरैरगुरुधूपगन्धिभिः व्यक्तहेमरशनैस्तमेकतः।
जहुराग्रथनमोक्षलोलुपम् हैमनैर्निवसनैः सुमध्यमाः॥ १९-४१

marmarairagurudhūpagandhibhiḥ vyaktahemaraśanaistamekataḥ |
jahrurāgrathanamokṣalolupam haimanairnivasanaḥ sumadhyamāḥ || 19-41

19-41. During the winter season, the women would wear crisp garments that had been fumigated with fragrance. When they moved, these garments would make a rustling sound, and through the translucent fabric the women's hip-girdles could be seen. This sight was enough to arouse sexual passions in Agnivarṇa who would yearn to untie and tie the knots of these girdles at the first opportunity.

Verse no. 42:

अर्पितस्तिमितदीपदृष्टयो गर्भवेश्मसु निवातकुक्षिषु।
तस्य सर्वसुरतान्तरक्षमाः साक्षिताम् शिशिररात्रयो ययुः॥ १९-४२

arpitastimitadīpadṛṣṭayo garbhaveśmasu nivātakukṣiṣu |
tasya sarvasuratāntarakṣamāḥ sākṣitām śīśirarātrayo yayuḥ || 19-42

19-42. During the long nights of the winter season, he would enjoy himself in the quiet of the closed rooms of his palace which were provided with all imaginable paraphernalia needed for pleasure, and where the only witness of his diverse libidinous activities were the oil-lamps which burnt with a steady flame as there would be no air to disturb them.

Verse no. 43:

दक्षिणेन पवनेन संभृतम् प्रेक्ष्य चूतकुसुमम् सपल्लवम्।
अन्वनैषुरवधूतविग्रहाः तम् दुरुत्सहवियोगमङ्गनाः॥ १९-४३

dakṣiṇena pavanena sambhṛtam prekṣya cūtakusumam sapallavam |
anvanaiṣuravadhūtavigrahāḥ tam durutsahaviyogamaṅganāḥ || 19-43

19-43. During the spring season, when the southern sultry breeze blowing in from Mt. Malaya¹ made the mango trees sprout new foliage and buds, the women of Agnivarna gave up quarrelling with him, and, because separation from him became very unbearable for them, they would search for him to make a reconciliation once again (so that they could have the joy of his close company).

[Note--¹Mt. Malaya is situated in the southern edge of the Western Ghats extending through the modern-day state of Tamil Nadu till it reaches the southern tip of the Indian peninsula at cape Comorin (known also as Kanyakumari), and then extends to the south-western state of Kerala.]

Verse no. 44:

ताः स्वमङ्कमधिरोप्य दोलया प्रेङ्खयन्परिजनापविद्धया।
मुक्तरज्जु निबिडम् भयच्छलात् कण्ठबन्धनमवाप बाहुभिः॥ १९-४४

tāḥ svamaṅkamadhiropya dolayā preṅkhayanparijanāpaviddayā |
muktarajju nibiḍam bhayacchalāt kaṇṭhabandhanamavāpa bāhubhiḥ || 19-44

19-44. Agnivarna would make one of the ladies sit on his lap as the couple sat on the seat of the swing hanging in the royal garden to enjoy rocking on it (during the spring season). He would suddenly give the hanging ropes of the swing a jerk at which the lady would (shriek and) leave her grip on the rope and clasp Agnivarna instead out of fear of falling down.

Verse no. 45:

तम् पयोधरनिषिक्तचन्दनैः मौक्तिकग्रथितचारुभूषणैः।
ग्रीष्मवेषविधिभिः सिषेविरे श्रोणिलम्बिमणिमेखलैः प्रियाः॥ १९-४५

tam payodharaniṣikṭacandanaiḥ mauktikagrathitacārubhūṣaṇaiḥ |
grīṣmaveṣavidhibhiḥ siṣevire śroṇilambimaṇimekhalaiḥ priyāḥ || 19-45

19-45. In the summer season, the voluptuous ladies would smear their round breasts with a paste of sandalwood, wear ornaments of pearls, and tie hip-girdles studded with gems around their waists as they played various sex-sports and enjoyed intercourse with Agnivarna to make him feel satisfied and happy.

Verse no. 46:

यत्स लग्नसहकारमासवम् रक्तपाटलसमागमम् पपौ।
तेन तस्य मधुनिर्गमात्कृशः चित्तयोनिरभवत्पुनर्नवः॥ १९-४६

yatsa lagnasahakāramāsavam raktapāṭalasamāgamam papau |
tena tasya madhunirgamātkṛśaḥ cittayonirabhavatpunarnavaḥ || 19-46

19-46. Agnivarna would drink wine laced with juices of mango leaves and petals of red rose which would be so rejuvenating and fragrant that it would remind him of the pleasant environment of the spring season, which in turn would stoke his libido, arouse his passions, and fire his lust.

Verse no. 47:

एवमिन्द्रियसुखानि निर्विशन् अन्यकार्यविमुखः स पार्थिवः।
आत्मलक्षणनिवेदानृतून् अत्यवाहयदनङ्गवाहितः॥ १९-४७

evamindriyasukhāni nirviśan anyakāryavimukhaḥ sa pārthivaḥ |
ātmalakṣaṇaniveditānṛtūn atyavāhayadanaṅgavāhitaḥ || 19-47

19-47. In this way, the lascivious king Agnivarna spent his days, season after season, in indulging himself in lecherous activities, enjoying sensual pleasures and satisfying his carnal desires to such an extent that he completely neglected his royal duties and responsibilities towards the kingdom and its subjects.

He would adopt different appearances in accordance with the character of the season of the time, and by merely looking at him one would be able to get an idea what season it currently was.

[Note--He would wear types of clothes that coincided with the season prevailing at that time. He would attire himself in a particular fashion during the winter season, changed to a different set of attires suitable for the spring season, another for the summer season, yet another that would be suitable for the rainy season, and when autumn came he would dress himself in a different set of clothes suitable to that season. So therefore, by looking at his appearance, one could easily say which season of the year it was.]

Verse no. 48:

तम् प्रमत्तमपि न प्रभावतः शेकुराक्रमितुमन्यपार्थिवाः।

आमयस्तु रतिरागसंभवो दक्षशाप इव चन्द्रमक्षिणोत्॥ १९-४८

tam pramattamapi na prabhāvataḥ śekurākramitumanyapārthivāḥ |
āmayastu ratirāgasambhavo dakṣaśāpa iva candramakṣiṇot || 19-48

19-48. In spite of his remaining engrossed or submerged in excessive sensual indulgences and carnal pleasures, it was fortunate for the kingdom that no enemy exploited this situation to attack it¹.

But evil deeds and a nasty way of life have their own repercussions. So therefore, Agnivarṇa developed a wasting disease (Tuberculosis) by the curse of the deity of the kingdom just like the Moon-God developed a similar disease by the curse of Dakṣa Prajapati².

[Note--¹It goes to the credit of the kings of that time that they kept their word of honour and abided with their commitments to respect the dignity and honour of the crown of their emperor, irrespective of what kind of man he personally was. The forefathers of Agnivarṇa had established an empire that stretched from the north to the south, and from the east to the west of the Indian sub-continent. This process was called 'Digvijay'. Every time a new king ascended the throne of Ayodhya, all the subordinate kings would come with gifts to pay their respects to him and reaffirm their loyalty to the crown and the throne.

²The story of the Moon-God being cursed by Dakṣa, which resulted in the former developing a wasting disease, is briefly as follows:

Prajapati Dakṣa cursed the Moon-God because the latter favoured his wife Rohini and neglected other 26 wives who were all daughters of Dakṣa. The curse caused the Moon to gradually lose his brightness and wither away.

Dakṣa had arranged the marriage of all his 27 daughters who personify the 27 lunar constellations or Nakṣatras. Though at the time of marriage of his daughters, the Moon-God had promised that he would treat all his wives equally, but he fell deeply in love with Rohini and neglected his other 26 wives. Feeling neglected, the 26 sisters jointly complained to their father Dakṣa about the treatment the Moon had given them. Dakṣa tried to reason with his son-in-law, the Moon-God, to mend his ways, but when the latter did not pay heed, the enraged Dakṣa cursed him, that he would develop a wasting disease which would cause his shine and vitality to fade away day-by-day. This curse, according to this legend, is the reason why the moon gradually reduces in size and brightness in the sky during the waning phase after the full Moon.

As this curse took effect and the Moon began to shrink, it caused chaos in the cosmos. It is because the Moon-God is the deity controlling the tides of the ocean, the mind, and the medicinal plants such as herbs that thrive in moonlight on earth. When the Moon's darkness was complete on the 15th night, everything was plunged in pitch darkness of the night.

Realising the catastrophe that their complaint has caused, the 26 sisters, along with sages, pleaded with Daksha to take back the curse. Now, since a curse once cast cannot be taken back fully, Daksha agreed to modify it--viz. the Moon will lose its brightness (wane) for one fortnight, and regain its brightness in the next fortnight (wax). This resulted in the natural phenomena we see every year round in the night sky--when the Moon wanes gradually to become dark on the 15th night called Amavasya, and then waxes gradually during the next fortnight to become bright on the 15th night called Purnima.

During the waning phase, the Moon-God felt very weak, and needed some support for survival. So he took refuge with Lord Shiva by doing penance at a place on the shore of the western ocean, called the Prabhas Kshetra, the present day Somnath pilgrim site. Lord Shiva was graceful and took pity on the Moon-God, giving the crescent shape of the Moon, when the latter was on the fringe of completely losing his brightness and vitality, by granting him refuge in the lock of his hairs. This is why a 'crescent moon' is depicted as being lodged on the lock of hairs on the head of Lord Shiva, and the place where the Moon did penance to please Lord Shiva came to be known as 'Somnath' (Som = moon; Nath = Lord of). This is also why Lord Shiva is also known as 'Chandra-shekhar' one who bears the moon on his head as a jewel.]

Verse no. 49:

**दृष्टदोषमपि तन्न सोऽत्यजत् सङ्गवस्तु भिषजामनाश्रवः।
स्वादुभिस्तु विषयैर्हृतस्ततो दुःखमिन्द्रियगणो निवार्यते॥ १९-४९**

dr̥ṣṭadoṣamapi tanna so'tyajat saṅgavastu bhiṣajāmanāśravaḥ |
svādubhistu viṣayairhṛtastato duḥkhamindriyagaṇo nivāryate || 19-49

19-49. In spite of his physicians repeatedly warning him about his fast decaying health and the cause of it, Agnivarṇa did not pay heed to them, because once a person gets sucked in a vicious cycle of sensual pleasures and enjoyment of material comforts of this world, it becomes impossible for him to get out of it.

{Bad habits that have become old, take a firm root, and refuse to leave. A person first allows himself to fall prey to them, and then they take a firm grip on him so fast and hard that only death would separate them. He becomes a slave to his own habits.}

Verse no. 50:

**तस्य पाण्डुवदनाल्पभूषणा सावलम्बगमना मृदुस्वना।
राजयक्ष्मपरिहानिराययौ कामयानसमवस्थया तुलाम्॥ १९-५०**

tasya pāṇḍuvadanālpabhūṣaṇā sāvalambagamanā mṛdusvanā |
rājayakṣmaparihānirāyayau kāmayaṇasamavasthayā tulām || 19-50

19-50. Gradually, king Agnivarna's body became pale, and he became so weak that he could not even wear his regular ornaments. He had to take support of his servants to walk; his voice became feeble, reduced to a murmur. He withered away, and looked forlorn like a depressed person sunk deeply in a state of mourning for the loss of his beloved.

Verse no. 51:

**व्योम पश्चिमकलास्थितेन्दु वा पङ्कशेषमिव घर्मपल्वलम्।
राज्ञि तत्कुलमभूत्क्षयातुरे वामनार्चिरिव दीपभाजनम्॥ १९-५१**

vyoma paścimakalāsthithendu vā paṅkaśeṣamiva gharmapalvalam |
rājñi tatkulamabhūtkṣayāture vāmanārciriva dīpabhājanam || 19-51

19-51. With king Agnivarna developing a wasting disease (Tuberculosis), the famed Solar Race became eclipsed with shadow of darkness cast by an ill fate which reminded one of the (i) night of the waning moon when only a sliver of the moon's brightness remains on the 14th night before complete darkness, (ii) or of a pond during the height of summer when it is on the verge of dryness, (iii) or a lamp's flame which is flickering and is about to get extinguished because the oil has been exhausted.

Verse no. 52:

**बाढमेष दिवसेषु पार्थिवः कर्म साधयति पुत्रजन्मने।
इत्यदर्शितरुजोऽस्य मन्त्रिणः शश्वदूचुरघशङ्किनीः प्रजाः॥ १९-५२**

bāḍhameṣa divaseṣu pāṛthivaḥ karma sādhayati putrajanmane |
ityadarśitarujo'sya mantriṇaḥ śaśvadūcuraghaśaṅkinīḥ prajāḥ || 19-52

19-52. When the citizens became sceptical about king Agnivarna's health and welfare, the trusted ministers and servants would try to reassure them that the king is spending some time in doing penance, observing fast and undertaking other austerities to get a son as an heir to the throne, and that is why he is becoming thinner because of abstinence from proper food and nourishment.

Verse no. 53:

**स त्वनेकवनितासखोऽपि सन् पावनीमनवलोक्य संततिम्।
वैद्ययत्नपरिभाविनम् गदम्न प्रदीप इव वायुमत्यगात्॥ १९-५३**

sa tvanekavanitāsakho'pi san pāvanīmanavalokya saṁtatim |
vaidyayatnaparibhāvinam gadam na pradīpa iva vāyumatyagāt || 19-53

19-53. In spite of having many wives, Agnivarna could not see the face of a son (i.e. he could not have a son who would inherit the kingdom's crown and throne after him), and neither could his physicians treat him for the dilapidating disease (Tuberculosis) that had inflicted him.

Just like the case of a flickering flame of a lamp that cannot survive a strong gust of wind, and gets extinguished, so likewise king Agnivarna could not be saved from the vicious attack of his disease, and died.

Verse no. 54:

तम् गृहोपवनव संगताः पश्चिमक्रतुविदा पुरोधसा।
रोगशान्तिमपदिश्य मन्त्रिणः संभृते शिखिनि गूढमादधुः॥ १९-५४

tam gr̥hopavanaeva saṅgatāḥ paścimakratuvidā purodhasā |
rogaśāntimapadīśya mantriṇaḥ saṁbhr̥te śikhini gūḍhamādadhuḥ || 19-54

19-54. The ministers and priests held a discussion and decided to cremate the body of king Agnivarna quietly in one of the royal gardens within the palace compound on the pretext of doing a ritual for the cure of his disease.

[Note--No hue and cry was raised during the king's funeral. Everything was organised secretly. No official mourning or prayer was held. Word was leaked to the citizens that the medicine men had decided to invoke some divine charm, a sort of black magic ritual, by which the demon who resided in the king's body in the form of a disease was burnt. Otherwise, that demon would have devoured everyone in the royal household first, and then come out of the palace to torment the citizens in large numbers. So it was thought that it would be wiser to get rid of the demon while it still resided in the king's body and feeding on his organs by burning it, than letting it survive to create more havoc in the kingdom.]

Verse no. 55:

तैः कृतप्रकृतिमुख्यसंग्रहैः आशु तस्य सहधर्मचारिणी।
साधु दृष्टशुभगर्भलक्षणा प्रत्यपद्यत नराधिपश्रियम्॥ १९-५५

taiḥ kṛtaprakṛtimukhyasaṅgrahaiḥ āśu tasya sahadharmacārīṇī |
sādhu dr̥ṣṭaśubhagarbhalakṣaṇā pratyapadyata narādhipaśriyam || 19-55

19-55. The ministers called a conference of senior citizens, and on their unanimous advice they anointed the senior-most queen, who showed signs of pregnancy, as the next ruler of the kingdom in the capacity of a regent-queen.

[Note--Traditionally only a male heir was appointed as a ruler of the kingdom of Ayodhya. It was the first time this ancient tradition was broken. Agnivarna had many wives, so the ministers and elders decided to select the one who was the senior-most amongst them, as well as the one who showed signs of pregnancy so that in due course of time her offspring could ascend the throne in the future, either upon her abdication in his favour, or after her death.

So therefore, she was made a regent-queen as an arrangement so that the administrative work of the kingdom did not suffer, and the throne did not remain vacant till the time a male heir was born who would ascend the throne as a full-fledged king.

With a queen ascending the throne as a regent in the absence of a male heir, the great dynasty of king Raghu, which traced its origin to the ancient king Ikshwaku, and still earlier to the Sun-God, came to an abrupt end.]

Verse no. 56:

तस्यास्तथाविधनरेन्द्रविपत्तिशोका उष्णैर्विलोचनजलैः प्रथमाभितप्तः।

निर्वापितः कनककुम्भमुखोज्झितेन वंशाभिषेकविधिना शिशिरेण गर्भः॥ १९-५६

tasyāstathāvidhanarendravipattiśokā uṣṇairvilocanajalaiḥ prathamābhitaptaḥ |
nirvāpitaḥ kanakakumbhamukhojjhiteṇa vaṁśābhiṣekavidhinā śīśireṇa garbhaḥ ||
19-56

19-56. When cool water was poured on her as part of rituals during her coronation ceremony, it soothed her grief at the loss of her husband, which in turn helped her to regain her mental poise, and calmly support the developing foetus in her womb (in the hope that when born the child would one day ensure continuity of the great lineage of his forefathers).

Verse no. 57:

तम् भावार्थम् प्रसवसमयाकाङ्क्षिणीनाम् प्रजाना

मन्तर्गूढम् क्षितिरिव नभोबीजमुष्टिम् दधाना।

मौलैः सार्धम् स्थविरसचिवैर्हमसिंहासनस्था

राज्ञी राज्यम् विधिवदशिषद्भर्तुर्व्याहताज्ञा॥ १९-५७

tam bhāvārtham prasavasamayākāṅkṣiṇīnām prajānā
mantargūḍham kṣitiriva nabhobījamuṣṭim dadhānā |
maulaiḥ sārddham sthavirasacivairhemasimhāsanasthā
rājñī rājyam vidhivadaśiṣadbharturavyāhatājñā || 19-57

19-57. Just like the earth keeps a fistful of seeds sowed during the rainy season hidden in its bowls (so that when the time is ripe, this seed would grow and produce crop), so

likewise the queen silently kept the foetus in her womb (and waited for the time when an offspring would be born to her).

Meanwhile, with the help of trusted, loyal and competent ministers and advisors she engaged full-time in diligently running the affairs of the kingdom she inherited from her husband.

[Note--This attitude of the queen endeared her to the subjects who were feeling neglected and lost by this time for long. She strived to put the things back on rail, and did everything possible that would repair the damage caused by her husband, the late king Agnivarna. This verse shows that in ancient times, it so happened that queens often surpassed kings in taking proper care of the kingdom and its people.]

इति महाकवि कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये एकोनविंशति - अन्तिम - सर्गः ॥

iti mahākavi kālidāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye ekonaviṁśati - antima - sargaḥ ||

Thus ends the 19th and the last Canto of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Chapter 4

Raghuvansham of Kalidas

List of kings of the dynasty of king Raghu, known as the 'Raghuvansha', who preceded and followed Lord Ram.

There were in all 29 kings in the dynasty, called the Raghuvansham, that was established by king Raghu of the Solar Race.

These kings and the canto number where they are mentioned are as follows--

Canto 1-2: King Dilip (1-dilīpa).

Canto 3-4: King Raghu (2-raghu).

Canto 5-8: King Aja (3-aja).

Canto 9: King Dashrath / Dasrath (4-daśaratha).

Canto 10-15: **Lord Ram** (5-rām).

Canto 16: King Kush (6-kuśa).

Canto 17: King Atithi (7-atithi).

Canto 18: This canto lists 21 kings as follows-- Nishadha (8-niṣadha), Nala (9), Nabha (10), Pundarik (11-puṇḍarīk), Khemadhanva (12-kṣemadhanvā), Devanik (13-devānik), Ahinagu (14-ahinagu), Paariyatra (15-pāriyātra), Sheel (16-śīlaḥ), Unnabha (17-unnābha), Vajranaabha (18-vajraṇābha), Shankhan (19-śaṅkhaṇa), Vyushi-taa-shwa / Vyushitaashwa (20-vyuṣitāśvam), Vishwa-sakha or Vishwashaha (21-viśvasakhaḥ / viśvasah), Hiranya-naabha (22-hiraṇyanābha), Kosala or Kosalya (23-kosalā / kosalya), Brahmistha (24-brahmiṣṭha), Pushkar-Lochan (25-puṣkarapatranetraḥ), Pushya (26-puṣya), Dhruvsandhi (27-dhruvasaṁdhi), Sudarshan (28-sudarśan).

Canto 19: King Agnivarna (29-agnivarna). {He was the last king of the Raghu dynasty, known as the Raghuvansha.

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Hindu Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional, Theological, and Historical Narratives from ancient classical Sanskrit texts.

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- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version).

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi Ramayan" based on Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) "Narad Bhakti Sutra"—

Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads; (29) Devotional Stotras and Stutis (hymns and prayers) of Lord Hanuman; (30) The Legendary Story of Lord Hanuman—spanning three eras of Treta, Dwapar and Kali Yugas; (31) An Anthology of the Ramayan-The Story of Lord Ram from Mahabharat, Srimad Bhagwat & Kalidas' Raghuvansham (32) Raghuvansham of Kalidas.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) ‘Dohawali’; (2) ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) ‘Kavitawali’; (4) ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(A-3) A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, otherwise also known as the “Ramayana” according to Goswami Tulsidas. My English version of this Book is comprehensive and an elaborate one, as it runs into many thousands of pages that endeavour to explain each single verse of the Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ in fine detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

(A-4) Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.

(A-5) (i) English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
 (ii) English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
 (iii) English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
 (iv) A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

All the Author’s Books listed under (A-1, A-2 and A-3) are available as e-books and printed books on the internet at the following websites: (a) www.amazon.com; (b) www.draft2digital.com; and (c) www.pothi.com.

(B-1) Further, Books listed under A-3, A-4 and A-5 are available in Printed Book format from a reputed Indian Publisher as follows:

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (B-2):

Chaukhamba Publishing House, Delhi. [Sri Neeraj Gupta.]

Postal Address: 4697/2, Street no. 21-A, (HDFC Bank wali Gali),

Ansari Road, Darayaganj, Delhi—110002.

Phone: Mobile (Neeraj Gupta)—+919811133683

Office: 011-23286537; 011-32996391

Email: chaukhambapublishinghouse@gmail.com

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(B-2) The following Books of Goswami Tulsidas listed under A-2—viz. Vinay Patrika, Geetawali Ramayan, Kavitawali Ramayan, Dohawali, Parvati Mangal, Janki Mangal, Vairagya Sandipani, Barvai Ramayan, Ram Lala Nahachu, along with certain other Books (e.g. Upanishads Dedicated to Lord Ram, Shandilya Bhakti Sutra, Narad Bhakti Sutra etc.) are being published by the following Indian Publisher:

Pratibha Prakashan, prop. Sri Radheyshyam Shukla, Delhi.

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